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THE INDEPENDENT

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THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO WEEKEND SPORT

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LUXURY HOTEL OFFER TWO NIGHTS FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

SEE WEEKEND REVIEW, PAGE 11 TOKEN COLLECT

'Once you kill people because you don't like what they say, you change the rules of war'



Firemen carrying a dead television station worker on a stretcher yesterday after Nato air strikes on the Serbian state TV offices Zoran Anastasijevic

HANGING upside-down from the wreckage was a dead man, in his fifties perhaps, although a benevolent grey dust had covered his face. Not far away, also upside-down - his legs trapped between tons of concrete and steel - was a younger man in a pullover, face grey, blood dribbling from his head on to the rubble beneath.

Deep inside the tangle of cement and plastic and iron, in what had once been the make-up room next to the broadcasting studio of Serb Television, was all that was left of a young woman, burnt alive when Nato's missile exploded in the radio control room. Within six hours, the Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short declared the place a "legitimate target".

It wasn't an argument worth debating with the wounded - one of them a young technician who could only be extracted from the hundreds of tons of



ROBERT FISK IN BELGRADE

concrete in which he was encased by amputating both his legs. Nor with the silent hundreds who gathered in front of the still-smoking ruin at dawn yesterday, lost for words as they stood in the little glade of trees beside St Marko's Cathedral, where Belgrade's red and cream trains turn round. A Belgrade fireman pulled at one of the bodies for all of 30 seconds before he realised that the man, swinging back and forth amid the wreckage, was dead. By dusk last night, 10

crushed bodies - two of them women - had been tugged from beneath the concrete. Another man had died in hospital and 15 other technicians and secretaries still lay buried. A fireman reported hearing a voice from the depths as the heavens opened, turning into mud the muck and dust of a building that Ms Short had declared to be a "propaganda machine".

We had all wondered how long it would be before Nato decided that Radio Televizija Srbije should join the list of "military" targets. Spokesmen had long objected to its crude propaganda - it included a Nato symbol turning into a swastika and a montage of Madeleine Albright growing Dracula teeth in front of a burning building.

It never reported on the tens of thousands of Albanian refugees who spoke of executions and "ethnic cleansing" in Kosovo. It endlessly repeated films that depicted Yugoslav soldiers as idealised heroes de-

fending their country. It carried soporific tapes of President Slobodan Milosevic meeting patriarchy, cossacks, Russian envoys and the Kosovo Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova. The channel was showing an American interview with Mr Milosevic when the first cruise missile smashed into the station's control room just after two o'clock yesterday morning.

But did this justify killing the night staff in their studios and taping rooms? Two weeks ago, Nato's spokesmen had been suggesting that RTS should have to carry six hours of Western television a day if it was to survive - CNN's bland, safe coverage of events presumably ofering some balance to the rubbish churned out on the RTS news. But once Nato decided this was as preposterous as it was impracticable, its spokesman announced that the station was not on the list of Nato targets. Then, on Monday, CNN's bosses called up from

Atlanta to inform the satellite hoys in Belgrade that they should pull out of the RTS offices. Against the wishes of other Nato nations, so the word went, General Wesley Clark had decided to bomb Serb television. CNN withdrew from the building in Takovska Street. And that night, we were all invited to have coffee and orange juice in the studios.

The building was likely to be a target of the "Nato aggressor", according to Goran Matić, a Yugoslav federal minister, as he walked us through the ground floor of the doomed building. Yet, oddly, we did not take him seriously. Even when the air raid siren sounded, I stayed for another coffee.

Surely Nato wouldn't waste its bombs on this tiresome station with its third-rate propaganda and old movies, let alone kill its staff.

Yesterday morning, the moment I heard the cruise missile scream over my hotel roof, I

knew I was wrong. There was a thunderous explosion and a mile-high cloud of dust as four storeys collapsed to the ground, sandwiching offices, machines, transmitters and people into a pile of rubble only 15 feet high.

Yet, within six hours, Serb television was back on the air, beaming its programmes from secret transmitters, the female anchorwoman reading the news from pieces of pink paper between pre-recorded films of Orthodox churches. All along, the Serbs had been ready for just such an attack. We had not believed Nato capable of such ferocity. The Serbs had.

The crowds still stood in the park as darkness fell, watching the men with drills punching their way through the concrete for more survivors. By that time, explanations were flowing from Nato's birthday celebrations in Washington. Serbia's "propaganda machine" had been prolonging the war. I won-

der. I seem to recall Croatian television spreading hatred aplenty when it was ethnically cleansing 170,000 Serbs from Croatia in 1995. But we didn't bomb Zagreb. And when President Franjo Tudjman's lads were massacring Serbs and Muslims alike in Bosnia, we didn't bomb his residence. Was Serbian television's real sin its broadcast of film of the Nato massacre of Kosovo Albanian refugees last week, killings that

Nato was forced to admit had been a mistake?

Yes, Serbian television could be hateful, biased, bad. It was owned by the government. But once you kill people because you don't like what they say, you have changed the rules of war. And that's what Nato did in Belgrade in the early hours of yesterday morning.

Full reports, pages 2-4
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Car gunmen fire on bus queue

FIVE PEOPLE were shot by a man firing indiscriminately at bystanders during a 30-mile car chase yesterday. Victims included a 75-year-old man at a bus-stop, who was hit by the gunman firing an AK-47 as he hung out of the window of a hijacked car being pursued across Lancashire and Greater Manchester.

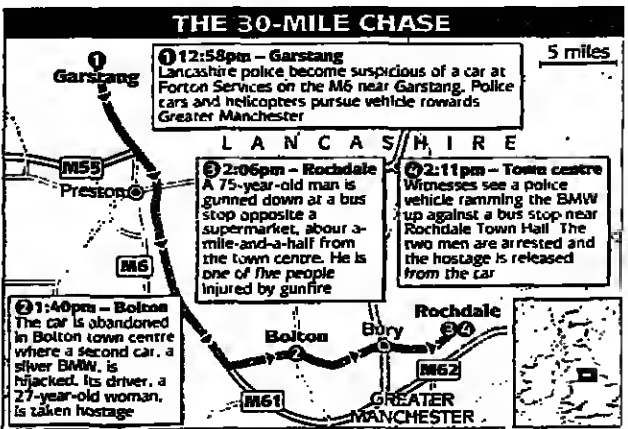
The female owner had been taken hostage but escaped when police rammed the car. Two men were arrested and a third was cornered in a house in Greater Manchester.

The incident, three days after the murder of 13 people by two teenagers at a school in Denver in the US, will reopen the debate about the availability of firearms in Britain.

BY IAN BURRELL
Home Affairs Correspondent

Yesterday's incident began at 1.20pm, when a car at Garstang service station on the M6 near Lancaster failed to stop for a police patrol vehicle, prompting a chase. Outside Manchester the gang abandoned their car and seized a BMW at gunpoint, under the surveillance of a police helicopter. There were reports of shots. Three police Range Rovers pursued the car towards Rochdale.

Witnesses said a man was hanging out of the window, peppered passers-by with bullets. "The guy was leaning out of the passenger side (of the car) shooting at people. It's shock-



ing, because Rochdale is usually quite a quiet little place; nothing really happens," said Martin Rhodes, 39. Shoppers said the car was speeding

through the busy streets at about 90mph. Police rammed it into a bus-stop in Rochdale town centre at 2.11pm. Officers recovered an AK-47 assault

rifle and a pistol. A police spokesman said: "A number of police officers and members of the public had firearms pointed at them and shots were fired. Six members of the public have been injured."

"No police were injured. Rochdale town centre has been cordoned off... Two men are being interviewed in connection with the incident."

Outside Rochdale Infirmary a woman, who asked not to be identified, said: "My husband has been shot in the shoulder as far as I know. I'm very worried about him." Robert Clegg, chief executive of Rochdale Health Care NHS Trust, confirmed three men had been admitted with gunshot injuries. A 51-year-old man had in-

juries to his arm and was undergoing surgery. Two other men, aged 46 and 76, had gunshot wounds to the legs.

He added: "None of the gunshot injuries were life-threatening and the relatives who had been informed were at the bedside. Two other gunshot victims were being treated in Bury and Oldham."

The spokesman said a 72-year-old woman, who escaped being shot despite being at a bus-stop which was sprayed with bullets, had been brought in with chest pains after witnessing the shootings.

A 27-year-old woman, believed to be the woman taken hostage, had been brought in with severe shock.

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I watched as 'TV Slobbo' turned into voice of hate

PROPAGANDA
BY MARCUS TANNER

TO MANY SERBS, especially in the deep countryside, it is the voice of absolute truth and the means by which "Slobbo" communicates his struggle against fascism and the New World Order to his embattled but adoring compatriots. To a small, probably shrinking minority, it is the Bastille - a fortress imprisoning the mind of Serbia from the world.

When I first worked in Serbian TV's English-language section in 1988, the Milosevic revolution was a work in progress. Radio Televizija Srbija had scarcely got into its stride. True, the Kosovo Albanians were already called "nationalists and separatists", and even "counter-revolutionaries", but the gloves were still on.

Within two years, the vocabulary of socialism had slipped away to reveal the savage racial hatred which for at least eight years has been RTS's stock in trade.

Since then RTS has turned into a vehicle that whips up genocidal passions, a vital cog in the business of psychologically preparing the entire Serbian nation for the necessity of exterminating its enemies. The paramilitaries now killing Albanian civilians in Kosovo were reared on a diet of ethnic hatred that poured out of the station. In that sense it is a crucial weapon in Milosevic's war against the Kosovars.

No one who ever sat through those 7.30pm *vesti* (news) programmes would forget the hate-filled propaganda that spilt out over the airwaves every night for up to an hour and a half. Nor could they forget the breathless, babbling tone of the presenters, the glee with which they referred to the "liquidation of enemy units", nor could they forget the presenters' reliance on the limited lexicon of state Serbian nationalism, whose terms dictated that every Croat was an "Us-

tashe Fascist", every Bosnian a "mujahadeen", every Albanian a "Shiptar" - a word which has the same connotations when used by outsiders as "nigger" does to black people.

The world has RTS to thank for adding a new phrase to the English language - "ethnic cleansing" - although the phrase has been corrupted; what the RTS broadcasts used to say was that the Yugoslav army was "cleansing the terrain".

Until the mid-1980s, Radio Televizija Beograd (as it was then) was a dozy Communist news network, whose widely ignored broadcasts were loaded with the impenetrable language of "self-managing socialism". Differences between the Yugoslav republics were concealed in a fog of socialist rhetoric (usually about "the urgent need for cadre differentiation") so that only ideological experts could tell what they were about.

RTS did not mutate into a monster on its own. The man who transformed it was Slobodan Milosevic. More far-sighted than any other Communist leader in Eastern Europe, Milosevic realised the massive popular power that could be harnessed to Serbia's faltering Communist system by playing on deep-seated racial fears. And Milosevic alone understood the role that television could play.

So it was that while the Berlin Wall was coming down and Communist parties were collapsing in the face of democratic challenges everywhere from the Baltic to Macedonia, in Serbia alone it survived, transformed beyond recognition by nationalism.

Milosevic's takeover of the Serbian League of Communists in 1987, displacing his moderate former ally and patron Ivan Stambolic, was the result of his prior takeover of RTS, and the success with which he

installed his allies into the institution. It was their strident anti-Albanian propaganda in the summer and autumn of 1987 that rallied Serbs behind Milosevic, toppled Stambolic, and set Serbia on its present course.

But it was during the wars with Croatia and Bosnia from 1991 to 1995 that RTS really came into its own. The commentaries after the 7.30 evening news became longer and increasingly intimidating, not only towards "fascist" Croatia and "fundamentalist" Bosnia but towards Milosevic's domestic opponents. It also started labelling political opponents as traitors, virtually inviting their assassination.

Serbia's opposition parties always recognised RTS was their real foe, more important even than the army. It was Vuk Draskovic - now Milosevic's deputy prime minister but in 1991 his bitter opponent - who labelled the heavily-guarded fortress in Belgrade the "Bastille" and who struggled, without success, to force Milosevic to relinquish his grip on this mighty institution.

Milosevic resisted. He would happily distribute ministerial portfolios to several one-time enemies but RTS remains sacrosanct.

In the last few years, challenges emerged. Using the privatisation process - an unwelcome but inevitable process for a government at bankruptcy as Milosevic's - a handful of private television and radio stations such as Studio B emerged to provide an alternative world view to RTS's diet of anti-Serbian "plots". But they were never a serious challenge, as the authorities limited their range to the vicinity of Belgrade, leaving the vast bulk of Serbia to RTS.

Serbia's worsening confrontation with the West over the last year saw that threat ex-



Firefighters battling with flames at the Serbian radio-television building in Belgrade

Britain 'should take in refugees'

HAVENS
BY ANDREW GRICE
Political Editor

PADDY ASHDOWN told Tony Blair yesterday that Britain should urgently admit thousands of Kosovar refugees to head off another humanitarian crisis in the camps across the borders from their homeland.

On his return from a five-day trip to the Balkans, where he acted as an unofficial envoy for the Prime Minister, the Liberal Democrat leader accused British ministers of double standards over the refugees.

Referring to Clare Short, the Secretary of State for International Development, he said: "It doesn't do much good for a British minister to roll up to the Macedonian government and give them a lecture on treating refugees when we in this country are taking 120 and Germany has taken 10,000."

The first Kosovar refugees being taken in by Britain are to arrive in Bradford tomorrow, where they will be housed at a disused mental hospital. But Mr Ashdown warned that Britain's "very laggardly" effort on refugees was not helping the pro-Western Macedonian government. "They are getting a bit tired of warm words; they want some action," Mr Ashdown said.

The situation in Macedonia was "very fragile" and Nato troops were being stoned by pro-Milosevic locals.

One of the biggest factors in this war is becoming the instability in Macedonia... For Milosevic, refugees are an instrument of war. We have to be prepared to win on the refugee battleground just as we have to be prepared to win on every other one."

Mr Ashdown said Nato had very nearly lost the battle 10 days ago, when only Mr Milosevic's decision to close the border with Albania had prevented "the terrifying sight of refugees dying in Nato's hands."

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, insisted yesterday that the Government remained ready to admit "some thousands" of refugees.

Belgrade offer was only for unarmed observers

HALF OBSCURED by the real war of bombs and missiles, and equally fierce fighting on the propaganda front, the first proposals have emerged for a Kosovo peace. For the moment, the deadlock between Nato and Belgrade remains complete; the statements thus far are not so much peace feelers as devices to stake out the ground. But if serious bargaining does start, the diplomats will have something, however meagre, to work with.

Yesterday, and to no one's surprise, the US and Britain gave short shrift to the latest gambit by Slobodan Milosevic, who for the first time since the conflict began a month ago, offered his assent to some form of international peace-keeping force in the province.

The details relayed to the outside world by the Russian envoy Viktor Chernomyrdin, after a day of talks with the Yugoslav President, are fuzzy. Mr Milosevic apparently would be ready to accept an "international presence" in Kosovo. Obviously it would contain Russians, but who else? Per-

haps Greeks and Italians from Nato, but not those countries which have been carrying out the bombing.

What is more, Belgrade insists the presence should take the form of unarmed observers, rather than the heavily armed force that Nato (and even the Russians) believe is essential. Finally, both Serbs and Russians insist that nothing can happen until Nato unilaterally halts its air campaign.

For the allies, these terms are obviously a non-starter. Quite apart from its understandable reluctance to accept any Milosevic promise, Nato is adamant that while the peace-keeping force might contain troops from non-member countries, it must be Nato-led, with none of the infamous "dual key" arrangements with the United Nations, which bedevilled efforts to keep the peace in Bosnia before 1995.

The reaction of Tony Blair was icy. Nato's demands "are

clear and they have to be met", he proclaimed, as an allied air strike devastated the headquarters of Serbian state television.

Mr Chernomyrdin, who spent most of Thursday with Mr Milosevic, must have expected as much. For one thing, the timing of the proposal is at least as important as its content - a hint of a shift in Belgrade's stance, designed to sow doubt at the Washington summit, exposing latent divisions between Britain, Nato's most hawkish member, and the US on the one hand, and the more cautious Europeans on the other. Unsurprisingly, British officials let it be known that Mr Chernomyrdin should drop any plans he might have had to turn up in Washington, and strain Nato unity in person.

But on the sidelines of the summit, Nato's nearest equivalent to a peace package - the German initiative unveiled a fortnight ago - will be under in-

tensive discussion. Bonn's ideas were initially (and unfairly) described in some quarters as a sell-out. In fact, as its authors insist, the initiative is less a free-standing plan than a "road map" towards securing Nato's five demands, endorsed by Kofi Annan, the United Nations secretary-general.

These are: a halt to military activities; the withdrawal of all Yugoslav security and paramilitary forces from Kosovo; the stationing of a peace force; the return of the refugees; and a political settlement "on the basis of" the Rambouillet agreement which Belgrade refused to sign.

What is more, the "road map" says the 24-hour halt in the bombing would only start after Serb forces began to withdraw. At the first sign Mr Milosevic was reneging on his undertakings, they would restart. For now, equally unsurprisingly, the Yugoslav President will have none of it.

The moment is not yet ripe for a major peace push, but if and when that moment comes, the present shadow boxing will start to matter.

Readers give £625,000

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READERS SHOULD continue to send in contributions to *The Independent's* appeal to help the refugees of Kosovo after aid agencies warned about the still-worsening conditions. The total raised by *The Independent's* appeal is now more than £625,000 but more is needed. "Donations are still coming in but at a slower rate now than before," warns a spokesman

for the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC). The committee is co-ordinating a series of appeals for the refugees of Kosovo, including that of *The Independent*.

The most serious difficulties being faced at the moment are the conditions for local communities in Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro who are hosting Kosovar refugees.

Appeal money is being used to pay for 120,000 baby kits for refugees living with families in Albania. Donations from readers are also being used to buy food, blankets, hygiene kits, cooking equipment, sanitation and essential water purification equipment. Medical equipment and antibiotics are being supplied in the south and north-west of Albania.

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WAR IN THE BALKANS

Children paint the images of terror

REFUGEE CAMPS

BY STEVE BOGGAN in Kukes, Albania

AT FIRST, the damaged children of Kosovo drew pictures of fairy-tale houses surrounded by picture-book flowers, images that surprised the aid workers who had been brought in to help them. "We asked if this was their home, and a surprising number said 'No, this is the house we will go back to,'" said one of them.

But, after a few days, the images began to change. Lulzim, aged 10, drew tanks bearing down on a group of houses beneath a sun with a sad face. On one side of the road was a mangled body in a violently scribbled pool of blood. The letters UCK, for Kosovo Liberation Army, were written near the body.

Brashim's picture was of a machine-gun, a knife and an automatic pistol drawn with such accuracy that it astonished all those who look at it. He is aged only eight.

Gabinete drew burning houses, a man hiding behind a tree with a gun, and bullets spewing from a tank. She is 10.

They are among 500 children who have passed through a Unicef nursery based at a disused cinema in the northern frontier town of Kukes, the place through which more than 300,000 refugees - at least half of them youngsters - have passed after running the gauntlet of Serbian ethnic cleansing.

Their experiences have left most of the children troubled, but a considerable number

have been more severely traumatised. "When they first come here, many are withdrawn or hyperactive, they can't mix with the other children, and display signs of trauma," says Penelope Lewis, of Unicef. "We play some simple games with them and for many, the act of just playing and laughing again helps. But there are others who need more."

Among them was the two-year-old girl who was found abandoned near a mosque on the edge of town. All attempts to find her mother, one of the refugees, have so far failed. She was taken in by another refugee - the only other person she would let near her - and she would say only the words "mother, tractor" and "UCK". After two weeks of careful help from a trained counsellor, she is now improving, sometimes she even smiles.

And there was a three-year-old girl who would freeze and cry helplessly whenever she heard the engine of a vehicle. Counselling established that Gezinjeta, whose name means Happiness of Life, had become traumatised by the noise of the Serbian tanks which had surrounded her family's home for days. She is improving, but still clings to her father. He says that when they return home to Kosovo they will walk.

There was one girl in her early teens who lost the use of her legs for 10 days after witnessing some horror, while a 13-year-old boy is receiving help for

an injury sustained to his foot when a grenade was thrown at his family during an incident of ethnic cleansing last year. Three others were killed.

"All of these children have seen terrible things" said Elvana Zhezhe, co-ordinator of the programme. "We encourage them to draw what they have seen and then talk about it. This helps and once a child has told a story often enough, it feels to them as if the story is about someone else."

There are only three counsellors to help the refugees, but more Albanians are being trained to go out and work with the other traumatised children of ethnic cleansing. The counselling among the miserable hordes of Kukes is already working its magic, encouraging smiling faces in a place where more than 100,000 people are living in conditions more likely to make one cry.

Heavy rain has turned already muddy refugee camps into quagmires. Families spend hours each day trudging ankle deep in mud from wet tents to water standpipes, or standing cold and soaked in queues for bread and tinned fish or beans. The aid agencies have worked hard to keep so many people alive and to prevent the spread of disease, but the conditions in which the displaced have been living are appallingly degrading. The refugees have been spread among about a dozen camps run by different nations



Bujar Telaku, a 10-year-old refugee from Kosovo, grimacing as nurses give him a vaccine yesterday at a camp in Kukes. Jerome Delay/AP

or aid agencies. The Italian camp is known for its good food but bad sanitation, the Greek camp for its weather-proof tents, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)/Médecins Sans Frontières camp for its

deepening mud but good healthcare, and so on. Many refugees have been taken in by generous Albanian families. Others have paid unscrupulous landlords for overpriced places in disused factories. In one old carpet fac-

tory, we found hundreds of people living in squalor, sharing just four toilets - only one of which worked - eating cold food and washing clothing outdoors.

The policy now is to move the refugees south, to various parts of Albania and out of range of

Serbian artillery. The UNHCR says no one will be forcibly moved, but in the early hours of yesterday, an entire camp of rough tents and tractors covered in plastic sheeting was cleared out in darkness from a strip near the town's mosque,

its occupants apparently being given little choice by local police over whether or not to board waiting buses.

It might not be a subtle way of helping people, but anywhere - outside the former Yugoslavia - has to be better than here.

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BY KATHERINE BUTLER

THE YUGOSLAV state oil company is still taking direct deliveries of refined products from European Union countries including Britain.

As Nato claimed success in destroying 25 per cent of Yugoslavia's fuel-storage capacity and the EU assured the world it was rushing through an embargo, agents at the Montenegro port of Bar said yesterday that Jugopetrol, the Serbian oil company, had been receiving huge deliveries of refined fuel oil and diesel, both vital for keeping Slobodan Milosevic's military on the rails.

Oil-refining and storage facilities have been key targets in Nato's bombing campaign but the interests of big business, particularly in Italy and Greece, both of which belong to Nato, mean Belgrade is still a valued customer. Italy and Greece have been most reluctant to agree to the EU embargo, which for "legal" reasons will only take effect from the middle of next week.

A Piraeus-based trader was quoted in the *Financial Times* as saying the embargo would probably be ineffective. "Be sure, oil will still get to Yugoslavia whatever the EU decides. The profits will be immense. And the way the Greeks feel about what's happening to the Serbs they'll make sure they send it."

While Italy and Greece are the main suppliers, shipments have also been coming from Britain.

Texaco said that 10 days ago it delivered 65,000 barrels of petrol to Yugoslavia from a British refinery aboard a vessel chartered from a Greek company. More cargoes have been arriving in recent days, according to shipping agents.

A French ship, chartered by Jugopetrol in Slovenia, was reported to have arrived two days ago carrying 2,600 tons of diesel. Larger vessels carrying ethnic Albanian guerrillas fighting inside Kosovo have written to Nato asking for air drops or ground forces to combat Serbian security forces they say are dispersing and digging in across the province.

It would exempt oil destined for helping displaced people within Yugoslavia in projects monitored by the International Red Cross and UN refugee agency. Shipments already on their way to Yugoslavia would also fall clear of the embargo. Each member-state is expected to determine individually the sanctions to be imposed on anyone breaking the ban.

Madeline Albright, US Secretary of State, yesterday asked the frontline states in the Balkans to join the embargo. The foreign ministers of Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania and Slovenia were urged to "join Nato and the EU in doing all we can to stop petroleum products from reaching Belgrade's armed forces".

Experts say that without a UN Security Council resolution there is little the allies can do to prevent Russia, China or Libya trading with Belgrade.

Hungary shipped 8,000 tons of Russian oil at the beginning of April, a paper claimed. Officials earlier said there had been no shipments since the bombing began but on Wednesday a minister admitted "small amounts" may have gone anyway.

TIMETABLE:
DAY 31

Friday 23 April

1am: Huge explosion at the RTS building in Belgrade, where Serbian TV has its main studio, takes all channels off the air.

7am: Serb TV resumes broadcasting from secret transmitters.

2.20pm: Russia's Balkan envoy Viktor Chernomyrdin says Milosevic has agreed to the deployment of foreign troops in Kosovo.

2.50pm: Reports that ethnic Albanian guerrillas fighting inside Kosovo have written to Nato asking for air drops or ground forces to combat Serbian security forces they say are dispersing and digging in across the province.

3.20pm: Yugoslavia says it discussed a possible unarmed UN presence in Kosovo with Russian peace envoy - apparently contradicting the envoy's reported statement that Belgrade had agreed to admit troops.

3.55pm: Nato says the reported Yugoslav offer on foreign presence in Kosovo falls well short of what is required.

4pm: Tanjug reports two Nato missiles have exploded near Pristina.

5pm: Yugoslavia tells the UN that Nato bombing of its chemical, oil and pharmaceutical installations has caused an "ecological catastrophe".

5.30pm: Albanian police load 3,000 refugees on to buses in Kukes and move them out of town.

5.30: A UNHCR team in Malina Mala on the Macedonia-Kosovo border urgently requests food and clothing for 100 refugees found in a mosque there who had walked 10 hours in the rain. Some of the children seemed unconscious, unable to talk or eat.

THE BALKAN QUESTION

KEY ISSUES BEHIND THE WAR EXPLAINED

Are the Serbs the crack fighters they are made out to be? The Serbs certainly think they are, although ironically they have made a cult of the Battle of Kosovo, which they lost to the Turks in 1389.

In spite of that celebrated and highly symbolic defeat, no other nation in the Balkans has such a clear image of themselves as warriors.

This self-confidence often transmits itself to visitors, such as Winston Churchill's Balkan emissary in the Second World War, Fitzroy Maclean,

who did much to disseminate the view that the Serbs single-handedly held down a host of German divisions.

In fact, the Serb martial record is patchy. They fought tremendously well in the 19th century against the Ottomans, who they liberated Serbia from the Sultan's rule, and in 1914 and 1915, when they trounced the Austrians attempting to storm Belgrade.

But other wars went badly. In the 1870s, Serbia took on Bulgaria and was soundly defeated, while in the Second

World War the Serb-led Yugoslav army put up only nominal resistance to Germany.

Much of the confusion about the Serbs' fighting ability centres on the Partisan guerrilla fighters whose successes the Serbs have largely appropriated as their own.

What is often forgotten is that while Serbs certainly made up the biggest contingent of fighters, the Partisans were essentially a multi-ethnic army and their commander, Josip Broz Tito, was half Slovene, half Croat.

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

'A fax arrived from Burchill reminding me: 1) that she was deeply professionally indebted to my wife; 2) that she continued to praise my writing; and 3) abjuring me not to regard her as a "heartless bitch"'

CLASH OF THE TITANS: WILL JULIE BURCHILL SURVIVE THE WILL SELF INTERVIEW?

THE BEST-WRITTEN SUNDAY PAPER IN BRITAIN, FEATURING DARCUS HOWE, ROY HATTERSLEY, DAVID THOMSON, JEREMY CLARKE, PEREGRINE WORSTHORNE, JAMES DELINGPOLE, ALAN WATKINS, JOAN SMITH, DEAR ANNIE AND WALLACE ARNOLD

'Rochdale, the last place for US-style shooting'

AS THE silver BMW roared down the road, pursued by police, the front-seat passenger leant from his window repeatedly and shot at bystanders with an assault rifle.

"I heard a helicopter overhead and went out to see what was happening," said Anthony Hodgson, who watched the gunman tear past with a police car 200 yards behind, and people in the street diving for cover. "A BMW went by at about 90mph, followed by the first police car. The BMW went round the corner and I couldn't see it any more than a lot more police vehicles arrived."

Moments later, the police rammed the hijacked vehicle off the road and the two occupants jumped from the car, firing at the police who had surrounded them. Dumping the woman owner of the car they had taken as hostage, the two men tried, unsuccessfully, to escape on foot.

The drama that ended in the centre of Rochdale yesterday

BY ANDREW BUNCOMBE,
LINUS GREGORIADIS
AND PAUL WAUGH

afternoon and resulted in the shooting of five bystanders, had begun an hour earlier at Thornton Services at Garstang on the M6 close to Lancaster.

Police tried to question the occupants of a red Rover. The car sped off - the Lancashire officers in high-speed pursuit.

With the force's helicopter overhead, the chase headed south towards Manchester, with the police radioing their colleagues in the Greater Manchester force for assistance.

In an attempt to shake off their pursuers, the men in the car drove into Horwich, near Bolton. They dumped the Rover and hijacked a BMW saloon being driven by a 27-year-old woman.

They are said to have fired their weapons into the air before forcing the woman into the back seat and setting off in the direction of Rochdale.



A police officer examines the wreck of a BMW car which crashed at the end of a police chase, following a series of apparent drive-by shootings in Rochdale

"There were two marked police Range Rovers going at high speed, followed by other unmarked cars with flashing lights," said Wendy Albison, 60, a hairdresser in the village of Bamford. "A helicopter was buzzing around overhead."

"One of the cars pulled up at a bus stop and then headed back in the direction from which it had come."

By this stage, as they approached Rochdale, the gun-

men were apparently firing indiscriminately at bystanders.

A 76-year-old man waiting at a bus stop in Edensfield Road was shot in the leg as the car sped past.

"I heard some echoing noises - at first I didn't think they were gunshots," said a local bookmaker. "I went outside and I saw a man at the bus stop lying there and someone was helping him."

"He had been shot in the leg. I helped him and kept a wet towel pressed on his leg until a doctor came out of a surgery."

The incident happened outside the home of the mother-in-law of the pop singer Lisa Stansfield. Jane Devaney said: "You hear about these things happening in America but you don't expect it to happen on your own doorstep," she said.

The gunman sped on, leaving usyhem and agony in their wake. It is believed that as

they passed another bus stop one of them leant out and fired again - hitting more people. Among the injured was an elderly woman.

With a convoy of police vehicles in pursuit, the gunmen headed towards the centre of Rochdale, speeding down Manchester Road. As they sped past a cyclist, one of the men again fired from the window, hitting him in the thigh.

Outside Rochdale Town Hall, the gunmen came to a dead-end and were forced to turn around. They sped back along the way they had come, pursued by four police Range Rovers. It was at this point that the police managed to ram the vehicle into a lamp-post.

The two men leapt from the vehicle, firing their guns.

Bill Shepherd, 57, a fork-lift truck driver at a nearby factory unit, said: "I was pulling out of work when I saw at least 10

police cars come down. It was just like a "Rambo" film.

"The next thing, there were a couple of gunshots and I saw the police had a man pinned to the road. I think the police had rammed the car."

"I heard three shots but I couldn't say where they came from. Then I saw another man pinned to the ground. The police asked me to pull my truck across the road to stop other cars coming down."

Doctors cleared over baby overdose death

TWO DOCTORS accused of covering up a massive morphine overdose given to a premature baby were found not guilty of serious professional misconduct yesterday by the General Medical Council.

Louise Wood was one day old when she received a morphine dose 100 times the intended amount at Rotherham District General Hospital on 1 October 1995. Within an hour of the two injections she was dead.

Dr Vivian Michel, 45, a registrar, administered the fatal dose. Dr Jean Shorland, a consultant paediatrician whose job included monitoring drug dosages, instructed him to complete a "potentially misleading" death certificate, which made no mention of the overdose, the GMC professional conduct committee heard. The consultant should have known the morphine overdose was a possible cause of death, the committee found.

Dr Shorland also should have immediately informed the

BY HELEN WILLIAM

coroner about the death of the baby.

The consultant admitted to making "a grave error of judgement" in not referring the case to the coroner. She said she believed Louise's death was caused by respiratory problems. Dr Shorland reported the matter to the coroner when she realised there was cause for concern, said her barrister, Robert Seabrook.

Announcing the decision, Sir Herbert Duthie, chair of the GMC professional conduct committee, told both doctors: "Taking all relevant matters into consideration, the committee has adjudged you to be not guilty of serious professional misconduct."

Outside the hearing, Dr Michel said: "This has been a very long and distressing time for everyone involved, especially Louise's family, and I realise that the matter has been fully investigated. I'm



Dr Vivian Michel: Gave Louise the fatal dose

very pleased with the decision that the GMC has reached today."

Allegations by nurses that they had warned Dr Michel the dose was excessive were found unproven.

The morphine was supposed to sedate the seven-week premature baby, who weighed 1.5kg and was suffering breathing problems, so that a chest

drain tube could be inserted.

The dose was drawn up by Hilary Evans, a junior doctor, who made an error in calculation and placed a decimal point in the wrong place. The dosage should have been checked before being administered but it was not, the GMC was told.

Dr Evans, 29, of Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, was found not guilty of serious professional misconduct on Tuesday.

Louise's grandmother, Dorothy Wood, of Rotherham, said yesterday the family was "disgusted and distressed" by the decision. "It was upsetting when it happened. It brought it all up again now, and we feel it was for nothing."

An inquest in February 1997 recorded an open verdict on Louise's death but criticised Dr Evans for her mathematical skills.

Mrs Wood said: "We feel that it was right that Hilary Evans was let off. She was made a scapegoat."

Montgomery in talks to buy control of Express papers

THE DEPOSED Mirror Group chief executive, David Montgomery, is understood to be seeking to buy the Express newspapers.

Mr Montgomery has met Lord Hollick, proprietor of The Express and Sunday Express, as well as the Daily Star, and told him he is interested in buying the two flagship papers.

Both papers are edited by Rosie Boycott, whom Mr Montgomery brought from magazine editing to edit The Independent on Sunday and, briefly, The Independent.

Mr Montgomery is believed

BY DAVID LISTER
Media and Culture Editor

to have held talks with two City venture capital companies, one of which is Apex, to raise money for the venture. He told friends he is keen to run a newspaper group again.

If Lord Hollick does decide to sell to Mr Montgomery he will probably sell the ailing Daily Star elsewhere, possibly to the Barclay brothers, whose representative, Brian Hitchen, has been seen in the building.

But it is the seven-day Express that Mr Montgomery

has his eyes on. The sale would involve a kiss-and-make-up act between Lord Hollick and Mr Montgomery as the two did not get on when Lord Hollick was a non-executive director at the Mirror group under Mr Montgomery.

Journalists at The Express, a number of whom worked under Mr Montgomery, are said to be alarmed at the prospect of renewing acquaintance with him.

One man who has stated in print that he is not the biggest fan of Mr Montgomery is the Express columnist and former

Independent editor Andrew Marr.

He is said to have run into Mr Montgomery at a restaurant where the latter said how nice it would be to work together again. Whether the feeling is mutual remains to be seen.

Lord Hollick, a New Labour supporter who has financial interests in television including Channel 5, already seems to be burying the hatchet with Mr Montgomery.

He has been telling senior journalists at The Express that Mr Montgomery was "a good chief executive" at the Mirror.

The total sum that may be placed in ISAs during the 1999/2000 tax year is £7000. Applicants must be 18 or over and resident and ordinarily resident in the UK. For full written details write to First Direct, Milshaw Park Lane, Leeds LS98 1PD. To maintain a quality service, calls may be monitored/recorded. CAT standard ISAs are not suitable for all investors. Neither ISA providers or the Government can guarantee the performance of ISAs. CAT standards do not carry certification from any regulatory body. The value of the Unit Trust can go down as well as up and may fall below the amount originally invested. Past performance cannot necessarily be taken as an indication of future performance. The Cash ISA flat rate is 5.87% and is variable. Interest calculated daily and paid quarterly. Rate correct as at 9 April 1999 but may vary in the future. AER is the Annual Equivalent Rate, which is a notional rate illustrating what the gross rate would be if interest was paid and compounded each year. Tax free means free from Income and Capital Gains Tax. First Direct is a division of Midland Bank plc, which is regulated by the Personal Investment Authority. We only advise on our own life assurance, pensions and unit trusts. Member HSBC Group

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00:00	DEPART Camden Town on the	A400	2 miles	N	
00:05	Turn left onto	A1	2 miles	N	
00:10	Turn right onto	A1000	1/2 mile	N	Barnet
00:10	At Muswell Hill	A1000	2 miles	N	Barnet
00:15	At Finchley stay on the	A1000	4 miles	N	Barnet
00:24	At Barnet bear right onto	A1081	3 miles	N	
00:30	Bear right onto	A1	1/4 mile	N	M25 J23 A1(M) J1
00:30	At M25 J23 A1(M) J1 stay on the	A1(M)	24 miles	N	A1(M) J4
00:56	At A1(M) stay on the	A1	5 miles	N	
01:00	Go onto	A6001	2 miles	N	Biggleswade
01:02	At Biggleswade stay on the	A6001	1/2 mile	W	
01:03	Turn right onto	A1	113 miles	N	
02:55	Stay on the	A1(M)	15 miles	N	M18 J2
03:08	At A1(M) J1 stay on the	A1	71 miles	N	Scotch Corner
04:19	At Scotch Corner stay on the	A1	2 miles	N	A1(M)
04:20	At A1(M) turn off onto	B8275	11 miles	N	
04:43	Turn left onto	A68	2 miles	NW	Tow Law
04:45	At W Auckland stay on the	A68	11 miles	NW	Tow Law
04:57	At Tow Law stay on the	A68	8 miles	N	Castleside
05:05	At Castleside stay on the	A68	12 miles	N	
05:19	Go onto	A69	3 miles	NW	Haydon Bridge
05:21	Turn off onto	A68	15 miles	N	Jedburgh
05:37	At Ridsdale stay on the	A68	2 miles	N	Jedburgh
05:40	At W Woodburn stay on the	A68	9 miles	N	Jedburgh
05:49	At Rochester stay on the	A68	22 miles	NW	Jedburgh
06:13	At Jedburgh stay on the	A68	9 miles	N	Dalkeith
06:23	At St Boswells stay on the	A68	24 miles	NW	Dalkeith
06:49	At Fela stay on the	A68	4 miles	W	Dalkeith
06:53	At Pathhead stay on the	A68	5 miles	NW	Dalkeith
06:59	At Dalkeith stay on the	A68	6 miles	W	
07:12	Go onto	A700	1 mile	W	Morningside
07:15	At Morningside turn right onto	A702	1/4 mile	N	Edinburgh
07:15	At Edinburgh turn left onto	A90	2 miles	NW	Blackhall
07:21	At Blackhall stay on the	A90	2 miles	W	Cramond Bridge
07:26	At Cramond Bridge stay on the	A90	6 miles	NW	
07:33	Stay on the	Forth Road Bridge	1 mile	N	
07:35	Stay on the	A90	2 miles	N	M90 J1
07:38	At M90 J1 stay on the	M90	27 miles	N	M90 J2 M823
08:01	At M85 M90 J10 turn off onto	A912	3 miles	N	*Check access*
08:07	Go onto	A9	1/4 mile	N	Perth
08:08	At Perth stay on the	A9	13 miles	W	
08:25	At Birnam stay on the	A9	1/2 mile	NW	Inver
08:25	Turn right onto	A923	1/2 mile	N	Blairgowrie
08:26	At Dunkeld stay on the	A923	1/2 mile	N	Blairgowrie
08:27	Turn left onto	No name	3 miles	W	
08:34	Go onto	A9	1 mile	N	Dowally
08:35	At Dowally stay on the	A9	3 miles	N	Ballinluig
08:39	At Ballinluig stay on the	A9	4 miles	N	Dalnaspidal
08:43	Go onto	A924	1 mile	NW	Pitlochry
08:44	At Pitlochry stay on the	A924	1 mile	NW	
08:45	Turn right onto	A9	23 miles	N	Dalnaspidal
09:09	At Dalnaspidal stay on the	A9	59 miles	NW	Daviot
10:12	At Daviot stay on the	A9	5 miles	N	N Kessock
10:18	Turn off onto	B865	1 mile	W	
10:21	Bear left onto	B861	1/2 mile	W	Inverness
10:22	ARRIVE Inverness				
10:22	DEPART Inverness on the	B881	1/2 mile	E	
10:24	Bear right onto	B865	1 mile	E	
10:27	Turn right onto	A9	5 miles	S	Daviot
10:32	At Daviot stay on the	A9	59 miles	S	Dalnaspidal
11:35	At Dalnaspidal stay on the	A9	23 miles	E	Ballinluig
11:59	Turn left onto	A924	1 mile	E	Pitlochry
12:00	At Pitlochry stay on the	A924	1 mile	SE	
12:02	Go onto	A9	4 miles	SE	Ballinluig
12:05	At Ballinluig stay on the	A9	3 miles	S	Dowally
12:09	At Dowally stay on the	A9	1 mile	S	Inver
12:10	Go onto	No name	3 miles	S	
12:18	Turn right onto	A923	1/2 mile	SE	Dunkeld
12:18	At Dunkeld stay on the	A923	1/2 mile	E	
12:19	Turn left onto	A9	1/2 mile	E	Birnam
12:20	At Birnam stay on the	A9	13 miles	SE	
12:37	At Perth stay on the	A9	1/4 mile	S	M90 J11
12:37	Go onto	A912	3 miles	S	Bridge of Eern
12:44	At M85 M90 J10 bear left onto	M90	27 miles	SE	*Check access*
13:07	At M90 J1 stay on the	A90	2 miles	S	
13:09	Stay on the	Forth Road Bridge	1 mile	S	
13:11	Stay on the	A90	8 miles	S	Edinburgh
13:18	At Cramond Bridge stay on the	A90	2 miles	E	Edinburgh
13:24	At Blackhall stay on the	A90	2 miles	E	Edinburgh
13:29	At Edinburgh turn right onto	A702	1/4 mile	S	Biggar
13:30	At Morningside turn left onto	A700	1 mile	SE	
13:32	Go onto	A68	8 miles	E	Jedburgh
13:48	At Dalkeith stay on the	A68	5 miles	E	Jedburgh
13:51	At Pathhead stay on the	A68	4 miles	SE	Jedburgh
13:55	At Fela stay on the	A68	24 miles	E	Jedburgh
14:22	At St Boswells stay on the	A68	9 miles	S	Jedburgh
14:32	At Jedburgh stay on the	A68	22 miles	S	Rochester
14:55	At Rochester stay on the	A68	9 miles	SE	W Woodburn
15:05	At W Woodburn stay on the	A68	2 miles	SE	Ridsdale
15:07	At Ridsdale stay on the	A68	15 miles	S	
15:23	Turn left onto	A69	3 miles	E	Horsley
15:26	Go onto	A68	12 miles	SE	Darlington
15:39	At Castleside stay on the	A68	8 miles	E	Darlington
15:47	At Tow Law on the	A68	11 miles	E	Darlington
15:59	At W Auckland stay on the	A68	2 miles	SE	Darlington
16:01	Turn right onto	B8275	11 miles	S	A1 (M)
16:24	At A1(M) bear right onto	A1	2 miles	S	Scotch Corner
16:28	At Scotch Corner stay on the	A1	71 miles	S	M62 J33
16:36	At A1(M) J1 stay on the	A1(M)	15 miles	S	M18 J2
17:49	Stay on the	A1	113 miles	S	A1 (M)
19:42	Turn off onto	A6001	1/2 mile	E	Biggleswade
19:42	At Biggleswade stay on the	A6001	2 miles	E	
19:44	Go onto	A1	5 miles	S	A1(M)
19:49	At A1(M) stay on the	A1(M)	24 miles	S	A1 (M) J9
20:14	At A1(M) J1 stay on the	A1	1/4 mile	S	
20:14	Turn off onto	A1081	3 miles	S	Barnet
20:20	At Barnet bear left onto	A1000	4 miles	SE	Finchley
20:29	At Finchley stay on the	A1000	2 miles	S	Muswell Hill
20:34	At Muswell Hill	A1000	1/2 miles	S	
20:35	Turn left onto	A1	3 miles	E	Islington
20:42	Turn right onto	A5203	2 miles	E	
20:47	Turn right onto	A501	1/4 miles	W	Kings Cross
20:47	ARRIVE Kings Cross				

The new Bora. Any excuse.

6/HOME NEWS

Boys to study ripping yarns

BOYS SHOULD read adventure stories such as *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* rather than romantic literature by Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters, the Government said yesterday.

BY BEN RUSSELL
Education Correspondent

David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, urged teachers to give boys ripping yarns to read to stop them being turned off English at school. Mr Blunkett wants to encourage the study of action-packed detective stories, science fiction, thrillers and adventures such as the Sherlock Holmes series, *Frankenstein* or *The War of the Worlds* in new guidelines for the national curriculum, due to come into force next year.

Ministers believe that schools may reinforce the belief that reading is "uncool" by offering inappropriate books to teenage boys. A senior government source said: "The more adventurous stories may appeal particularly to boys. You might find their interests waning from other books. In the national curriculum there is Robert Louis Stevenson and Jane Austen but Robert Louis Stevenson is more likely to appeal to boys and schools should be aware of that."

Fewer than two-thirds of 11-year-old boys achieved the expected standard in reading last year compared with nearly four-fifths of girls. Tests for 14-year-olds show that while nearly three-quarters of girls reached expected standards in English less than three-fifths of boys hit the target.

Research carried out by the Government's curriculum advisers, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, has suggested that giving boys non-fiction and thrillers can increase English standards.

Under the national curriculum, secondary school children must study two works of fiction by major writers from before 1900 and two by 20th-century authors. The recommended writers include Jane Austen, Emily and Charlotte Brontë as well as Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Henry James and H G Wells. The 20th-century recommendations include William Golding, Graham Greene and D H Lawrence.

Estelle Morris, an Education minister, said: "We have got to take very seriously the fact that boys do not read."

"I do not believe that there are boys' books and girls' books. But all the evidence is that boys do not read enough, which is a massive problem which we must address in terms of the underachievement of boys and there are some books which have content which boys prefer to read."

The Government's stance was backed by head teachers yesterday, who claimed that boys were being "turned off" school at a younger and younger age.

John Dunford, the general secretary of the Secondary Heads Association, which is holding its annual conference in Brighton, said boys as young as 12 were becoming disaffected with school.

Mr Dunford, the former head teacher of a big comprehensive school in Durham, said: "When I started teaching it was 16-year-olds you had to worry about, now it is 12 and 13-year-olds."

"I have seen the age dropping throughout my teaching career. We are seeing it at the

RECOMMENDED READING



FRANKENSTEIN (1818) BY MARY SHELLEY
The prototypical horror story of a man-made monster who turns on its creator. It is also a moving variant on the Noble Savage theme of innocence betrayed.



THE WAR OF THE WORLDS (1898) BY H G WELLS
Generally held to be the first true British science fiction novel. It is the story of how spidery Martians land in Woking and trash the Surrey countryside as the locals flee.



ROBINSON CRUSOE (1719) BY DANIEL DEFOE
The first English novel, a fictionalised account of Alexander Selkirk's sojourn on a desert island, with added cannibals, domestic economics and a manservant called Friday.



KIDNAPPED (1886) BY R L STEVENSON
Highland and high seas romance following David Balfour, swindled out of his inheritance, and Alan Breck, Jacobite adventurer, as they trek across Scotland.



THE TIME MACHINE (1895) BY H G WELLS
SF adventure that turns into socio-political allegory when the Traveller's excursion into the 800th millennium finds most humans mutated into a nasty throng of Morlocks.

age of 12, which is alarming, whether it is because of increasing maturity or the increasing influence people have through the Internet and television."

Judith Mullen, the association's president and the head teacher of Melbourn Village

College in Cambridgeshire said: "How often do we see the bright-eyed bushy-tailed student, often male, switch off or no longer finding school challenging and stimulating? The gap between attainment of boys and girls in many of our schools is still far too wide for comfort."

Three right-wing groups claim link to Brixton bomb

M15 AND the Metropolitan Police Racial and Violent Crimes Taskforce are investigating the Brixton nail bombing as Scotland Yard becomes increasingly convinced that the bomber was racially motivated.

Detectives investigating the explosion, which hit a busy shopping market in south London last Saturday injuring 38 people, are pursuing the theory that the bomber is a renegade member of a far-right organisation with a racist grudge.

At a briefing yesterday, Detective Chief Superintendent John Bunn, of Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist branch, said the racial motive was a "very, very serious line of inquiry".

He said: "We are looking at

BY IAN BURRELL
Home Affairs Correspondent

the possibility that it was white racist thugs who committed this brutal crime."

It was revealed that three more extreme right-wing "groups" have claimed responsibility for the attack, following an earlier claim purporting to come from neo-Nazi thugs Combat 18.

The claims included one from someone using the name White Wolf, who has a long history of writing hate mail to black groups and recently sent a vitriolic circular to black MPs. Another claim was made by a group called the English National Party.

None of the claimants has given any specific information which would corroborate their involvement.

Mr Bunn confirmed yesterday that M15 and Commander John Grieve, the head of the Racial and Violent Crimes Taskforce and the man investigating the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence, were participating in the bomb investigation.

Police are still looking at the claim said to have been made by Combat 18. Mr Bunn said: "That line of inquiry is being investigated very thoroughly and looked at in meticulous detail."

Combat 18 has been under such heavy police surveillance in recent months that experts believe it would have been

difficult for it to carry out the attack.

Detectives have not ruled out the possibility of a broken-down 150 bus which had stalled close to where the bomb went off. Mr Bunn said it was conceivable that Brixton was not the bomber's target. "There is the possibility the bomber got off that bus and was on his way somewhere else," he said.

A £30,000 reward has been offered for anyone with information leading to the arrest and conviction of suspects.

Police will today stage a reconstruction at the scene of the bomb. Officers will seek to trace new witnesses - particularly those who only use the market at weekends.

IN BRIEF

'Lethal' heroin link to five deaths

DRUG USERS were warned yesterday about a "potentially lethal" form of heroin that may have caused the deaths of five people in the past week. Detectives fear that the link between five deaths in Norfolk could be a "particularly pure" form of heroin known as China White.

Octuplet mother's house fraud

MANDY ALLWOOD, who was pregnant with octuplets but lost all the babies, has pleaded guilty to mortgage fraud. At Birmingham Crown Court yesterday, Allwood, 33, was bailed after admitting giving false information to a bank and a building society. The case was adjourned.

Lawrence parents honoured

DOREEN AND NEVILLE Lawrence, parents of the murdered black teenager Stephen Lawrence, were named media personalities of the year at the Race In The Media Awards at the Savoy in London yesterday.

Traffic relief for Stonehenge

A £125M cut-and-cover tunnel and a new visitors' centre will be built outside Stonehenge in Wiltshire in a scheme to reduce traffic near the world heritage site.

Independent's writers win awards

THE INDEPENDENT continues to win awards for journalistic excellence. David McKitterick, Ireland Correspondent, was named Feature Writer of the Year in the Northern Ireland press and broadcast awards last night. Hilary Clarke of *The Independent on Sunday* won the national newspaper award in the Commission for Racial Equality annual Race in the Media awards for an article on race relations in the East End of London.

Mother ordered to send son back

AN ENGLISHWOMAN who fled with her children from Cyprus after alleged abuse by her gambling husband was ordered to send her son back.

She found a home in Britain and her son, aged six, and 14-year-old daughter (who has a different father) were settled in full-time education after a High Court judge allowed her to stay.

But three Appeal Court judges yesterday ruled that she must comply with the Hague Convention, the treaty covering "love-dug" children. Although both parents have British citizenship, the boy was born and raised in Cyprus and under the convention his fate must be decided there. Now the woman, who met and married her husband in Britain, faces months of uncertainty battling over custody in Cyprus.

In January a High Court judge, Mrs Justice Hogg, refused to return the son after the

BY STEPHEN HOWARD

mother pleaded that he would be at grave psychological risk.

Under Article 13B of the convention, cases where there is a danger of physical or psychological damage become exceptions to the rule that children unlawfully taken must be returned to their country of origin. But Lady Justice Butler-Sloss said the mother was "the author of her own misfortunes. The parent is creating the psychological situation and not the child. Article 13B would be relied on by every mother and it would drive a coach and four through the convention. It is not in the interests of international relations."

The ruling is to be sent to a court in Cyprus, which will hear the case over the son's final residence. Identification of the family is barred to protect the children.

صكرك من الاصل

VOTING FOR A NEW BRITAIN

Connery in last-reel bid to save SNP



ONE SMALL ray of sunshine pierced the gloomy political skies over the Scottish National Party's headquarters: the long-awaited arrival of Sean Connery. With the SNP lagging 20 points behind Labour in polls, campaign managers were pinning hopes for a revival on their most famous backer.

But before turning his mind to a big set-piece appearance at a rally on Monday and a party political broadcast, the former Bond star had other business. His latest film, *Entrapment*, is

BY FRAN ABRAMS
Westminster Correspondent

out in the US and he entertained American film journalists at the fancy Witchery restaurant in Edinburgh last night. His schedule was further complicated by a crew from the American 60 Minutes programme who are making a documentary about him. They accompanied him around the streets where he was once a milkman and slotted in the political angle by interviewing

the SNP leader, Alex Salmond, who must have been happy to inject a little glamour into an otherwise desperate campaign. Connery is staying with his wife, Micheline, in the five-star Caledonian Hotel, where the American film corps is also billeted. Leaving the hotel yesterday, he was asked when he was joining the SNP campaign. He replied: "I never left." Asked what he thought of Donald Dewar, Secretary of State for Scotland, Connery said: "What team does he play for?"

Connery's presence provided the SNP's best hope of persuading Scots to vote, as its last broadcast entreated, with their hearts. Previous interventions by him had remarkable effects: a 1991 broadcast was followed by a seven-point rise in ratings. His support has a down side, though: he is the SNP's biggest donor, giving £40,000 a year, and it has caused controversy.

Even after registering to vote in London the actor, who lives abroad but who is said to be looking for a home in Scot-

land, was dubbed "The member for the Bahamas". A Labour spokesman, asked about the Connery effect, said: "It is going to be difficult for someone who is not resident in the UK and who can only spend a certain number of days here without being liable for tax to tell hard-working Scots to pay more."

Labour refuses to display complacency but only a miracle can put the SNP ahead in polls. But that will not stop the nationalists hoping for on Connery's presence will remind

Scots they can compete with the best in the world, they say, while Labour asks them to be content with what they have. "He is the living embodiment of the fact that we don't have to buy into the parochial under-achieving, happy-with-what-we've-got Labour vision of Scotland," a party worker said. Whatever Labour may say in the heat of an election, it will continue to court Connery afterwards. His promise to establish a film studio in Scotland could generate valuable jobs.

He has met Gordon Brown and Tony Blair. And, whether or not he can influence the result, Scottish politicians expect to see more of Connery.

"I can't just play golf, do nothing else and then play gin rummy in the afternoon. I need more than that. I'm caught by what's happening in Scotland. I'm caught by the timing of it all... I'm now in my 69th year and have an opportunity to do something really worthwhile and interesting there," he said in a recent interview.

Socialist is Blair's worst nightmare in Scotland

"HOWZIT GOIN', pal?" Tommy Sheridan, eternally solicitous for the welfare of the workers, inquires of the Glasgow council employee on the phone, before confirming, with man-of-the-people modesty, that "it's Tommy... aye, Councillor Sheridan" calling.

Almost a decade has passed since the handsome Mr Sheridan, now 35, became Scotland's foremost (living) working-class hero, while spearheading the campaign against the poll tax, the Thatcher policy which, more than any other, sealed Scotland's political estrangement from London.

Mr Sheridan was voted on to Glasgow City Council in 1982 as he languished in Saughton Prison, Edinburgh, for refusing to pay the tax. The vote was a show of solidarity from the working-class estates of the Pollok district of Glasgow where Mr Sheridan grew up, and to which he returned after university to incite poll tax protests.

On the eve of the elections to Scotland's Parliament, he has graduated from the Tories' bogymen to menace New Labour. For Mr Sheridan's tiny Scottish Socialist Party (1,200

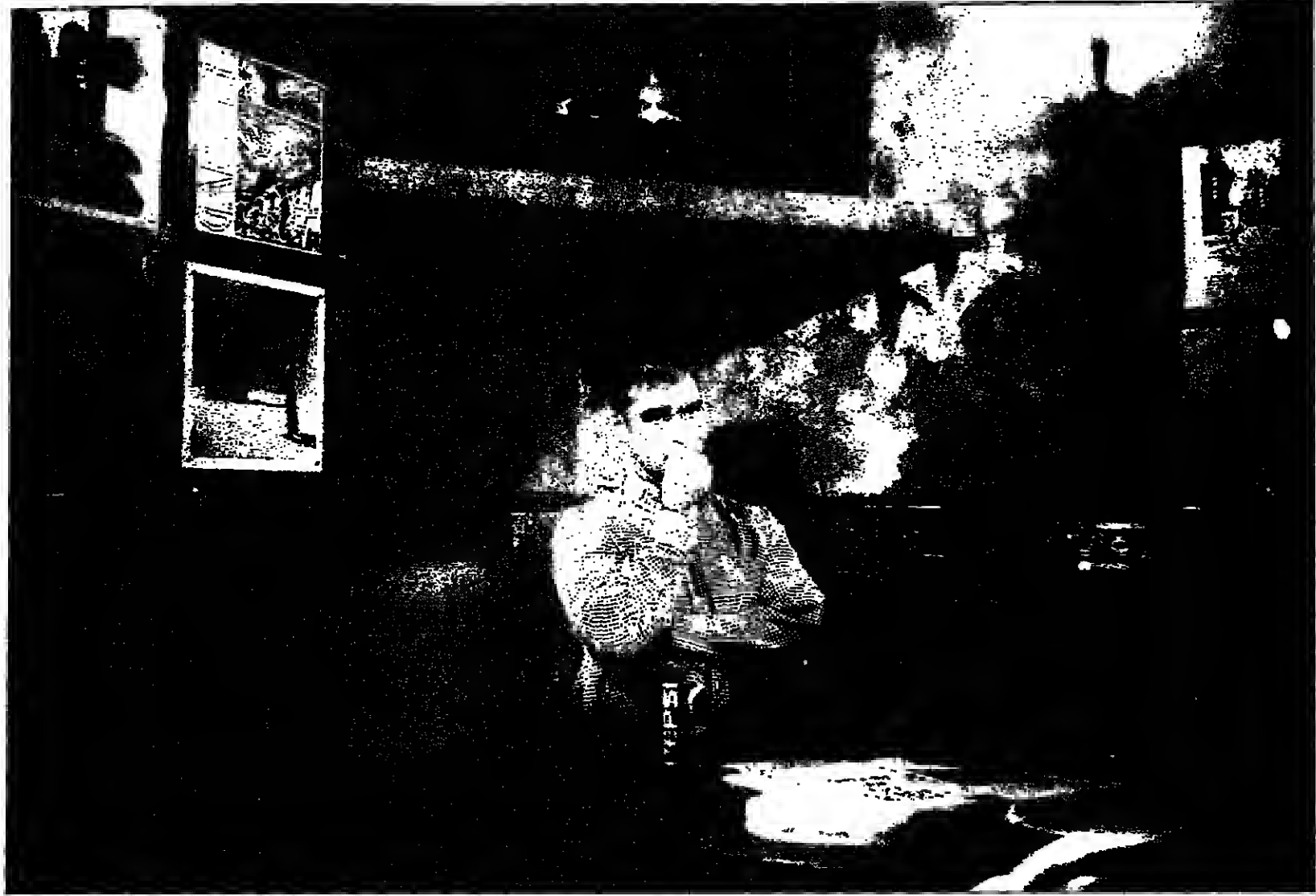
BY MARY BRAID

paid-up members) could, according to some polls, hold the balance of power in the new Parliament, elected by proportional representation. The SSP could sneak into Holyrood with as many as eight seats.

Sitting in his office, beneath a poster in which Margaret Thatcher metamorphoses, in two neat, easy steps, into Tony Blair, Mr Sheridan, though cautious about poll predictions, clearly revels in the possibilities PR offers to little parties. "The SSP holding the balance of power is Donald Dewar's nightmare scenario," he smiles. "But we could just find ourselves in that position."

If the "nightmare" comes true, New Labour can expect no mercy from an SSP packed with the militants it expelled on the long and bloody road back to electability.

South of the border, Mr Sheridan would be dismissed as a left-wing loony. And even in more socialist Scotland, a few denounce the Pied Piper of Pollok as a dangerous "heid-banger" who, behind an egalitarian front and maverick humour,



Tommy Sheridan at a Scottish Socialist Party fringe meeting at the Scottish Trades Union Congress in Glasgow

David Rose

is manipulating the masses. Many Scots, however, admire the man even when they dislike his politics. For while he has been enigmatised by some journalists as the "most gifted politician of his generation", he has rejected career advancement to champion his

class. Some 14 years after graduating from Stirling University he lives in a Pollok council flat, chasing up housing complaints, agitating for the revolution, and surviving on a £5,500 annual councillor's allowance. His living-room is a shrine to socialism. Lenin gazes down

from above the gas fire. On the opposite wall is a picture of John Maclean, one of the Red Clydesiders, whose dream of a Scottish people's republic caused David Lloyd George to send tanks to Glasgow.

Maclean was the father of Scotland's romantic independent socialist tradition. Mr Sheridan carries the flame. With Scottish New Labour barred from coupling nationalism with socialism, the SSP is hoping to receive Labour supporters' second votes.

Mr Sheridan has developed militantism with a cuddly, human face. He flaunts his adoration for his trade unionist mum, Alice, and offers visitors homemade shortbread from a

Tupperware box. Pictures of his girlfriend, Gail, an air stewardess, are pinned to his office wall alongside Lenin.

Two years ago his home answering machine informed callers that he was probably out fighting the Tories. Now it reports: "I am probably out fighting Blair and his new Tories."

Those who warn that he is concealing the dangerous reality of his political beliefs also have to battle against boy-next-door good looks. And in Mr Sheridan they come with touching human vanity.

"Where do you get the tan?" asks a journalist at a poorly attended SSP press conference of Mr Sheridan's Derek Hatton-style permacolour. "At Bella-

houston Sports Centre," he smiles. Council-run and "£1.65 a sunbed session".

And while po-faced militants stick rigidly to Marxist tract, Mr Sheridan is happy to chat about the personal. With middle age looming, has he ever regretted not ditching idealism, donning the suit and moustache the New Labour script? "Nah," he says. "I could never have lived with myself." But principles, he confesses, are harder to keep. Gail is 35 and they are both broody. £5,500 a year is hardly going to raise a child, though a Scottish MP's salary would. Even £20,000 - the salary the SSP has promised its members would only accept if elected - would be a fortune.

Salmond takes to streets for votes

BY JACK O'SULLIVAN
AND ANDREW GRICE

THE SCOTTISH National Party abandoned its daily press briefings yesterday, signalling a deepening crisis caused by the party's poor showing in opinion polls.

Trailing Labour by 20 points in the most recent poll, the SNP took its campaign to the streets in a series of walkabouts. Defending the change in tactics, Alex Salmond, the party's leader, said: "We have to face the fact that the vast majority of the press in Scotland are in the Labour Party's pocket."

"Instead of dancing to a tune they want to establish, what we have decided to do is take our campaign into the streets and homes of the people of Scotland. On that campaign we think we can win."

Despite the SNP's decline, Labour leaders are to issue a strong "no complacency" warning to party workers and supporters in Scotland. "Alex Salmond may be wounded and injured but he is not dead," a Labour spokesman said last night. "He is still dangerous. Now we have got to kill him off."

Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, who is playing a big role in Labour's campaign, is said to be worried that the party will become complacent. "Mr Salmond went on a walkabout in the Glasgow constituency of Govan, where the SNP's Nicola Sturgeon came within 3,000 votes of beating Labour in the 1997 election. It had been thought that the SNP had a good chance of winning but serious doubts were raised yesterday about whether the SNP can even win there or in two of its other chief target seats - Ochil and Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber."

Halford, police dissident, ready for a political fight

ALISON HALFORD has been in a few scraps in her time. She accused Merseyside Police of sexism after being repeatedly refused promotion and, in her new role in the North Wales Police Authority, she has crossed swords with the chief constable, who she alleges is involved in cover-ups.

And now, most surprisingly of all, perhaps, given her Conservative upbringing in East Anglia, she has surfaced as a Labour candidate in the election for the Welsh Assembly. She is standing in Delyn, North-east Wales and according to the Institute of Welsh Politics at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, she has a good chance of winning the seat. "I'm not sure whether I voted or how I voted during my early years in the police. I imagine if I did vote it would have been Conservative. My parents voted Conservative," Ms Halford said.

BY BARRIE CLEMENT

She joined the police in 1962 and in her 21 years in London went from constable to chief superintendent, before becoming an assistant chief constable on Merseyside. Her conversion to Labour began in London. "I've always had a social conscience. I was very unhappy about people being forced to live in cardboard boxes."

Her two-year fight to prove she had been the victim of discrimination on Merseyside - she was rejected for promotion nine times - ended with an out-of-court settlement with both sides claiming victory.

Ms Halford moved to north Wales in 1994, when she joined the Labour Party and was soon asked to become a councillor. Inevitably she was also seconded to the Police Authority. Equally inevitably, perhaps, she has been involved in running



Halford: Labour convert

battles with Michael Argent, the chief constable.

Some of her political rivals - she is running against three women - claim she is obsessed with police misdemeanours. She accuses senior police of undermining complaints procedures to protect officers from investigation. If it is an obsession, it is shared by other members of the Police Authority

and by two businessmen who have set up the "Campaign for Justice", seeking a Home Office inquiry into police activities in north Wales.

Ms Halford is anxious to show she is not a one-issue politician. She believes the Welsh Assembly will be far closer to the people it represents. She likes its "transparency and inclusiveness" and the balance between the genders. "I want the Assembly to behave ethically, not to squander money."

However, the phrase "equal opportunities" is never far from her lips. Would she advise a young woman to become a police officer? "There are dinosaurs and chauvinists in every walk of life. But I generally think that most senior police officers are trying harder. The police service is a wonderfully fulfilling career or, should I say, way of life."

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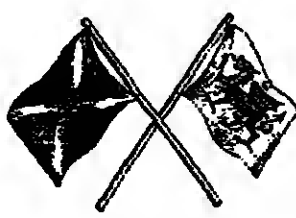


Common sense in a crazy world

£50,000 CAPITAL AND INTEREST LOAN FOR 25 YEARS ON A PROPERTY VALUED AT £60,000 AT AN INTEREST RATE OF 6.44% (BANK OF ENGLAND RATE) WITH THE FIRST MONTHLY PAYMENT £494.74 (GROSS) INCLUDING ACCRUED INTEREST, FOLLOWED BY 298 PAYMENTS OF £352.74 (GROSS) AND ONE PAYMENT OF £328.74 (GROSS). TOTAL AMOUNT PAYABLE IS £70,306.86. THE TOTAL AMOUNT PAYABLE INCLUDES SOLICITOR'S MORTGAGE CHARGES, £175.00 (CHARGES MAY VARY IN SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND). DEEDS PRODUCTION CHARGE, £27.00 AND REDEMPTION AND SEALING CHARGE, £25.00. LOANS ARE SUBJECT TO STATUS AND VALUATION AND ARE ONLY AVAILABLE TO PEOPLE AGED 18 OR OVER. RATE AND APRIL SHOWN ARE FOR RESIDENTIAL INTEREST ONLY. THE APR QUOTED IS FOR MORTGAGES ON A CAPITAL AND INTEREST REPAYMENT BASIS, ALTHOUGH THIS MORTGAGE IS ALSO AVAILABLE ON AN INTEREST ONLY BASIS. FOR INTEREST ONLY MORTGAGES AN APPROPRIATE PERSONAL PLAN OR SAVINGS PLAN FOR THE AMOUNT AND TERM OF THE LOAN MUST BE AGREED. (CONTRIBUTIONS/REPAYMENTS WILL BE PAYABLE TO THE COMPANY INVOLVED). THE APR AND TOTAL AMOUNTS PAYABLE HAVE BEEN CALCULATED ON THE BASIS THAT THE ALLIANCE & LEICESTER FLEXIBLE MORTGAGE VARIABLE RATE (CURRENTLY 4.44% (BANK OF ENGLAND RATE)) WILL BE CHARGED THROUGHOUT THE TERM OF THE MORTGAGE. THE APR QUOTED MAY BE DIFFERENT IF YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES DIFFER FROM THE ASSUMPTIONS ON WHICH THE EXAMPLE IS BASED. THE ALLIANCE & LEICESTER FLEXIBLE MORTGAGE IS ONLY AVAILABLE TO NEW HOMEOWNERS AND EXISTING HOMEOWNERS MOVING HOME. THE PROPERTY WILL BE USED AS SECURITY FOR THE LOAN AND MUST BE ADEQUATELY INSURED. A MINIMUM OF £10,000 APPLICABLE. MINIMUM LOAN AMOUNT DOES NOT APPLY TO EXISTING HOMEOWNERS MOVING HOME. FOR LOANS EXCEEDING 50% OF THE PURCHASE PRICE OR VALUATION (WHICHEVER IS LOWER) A HIGH PERCENTAGE LOAN FEE WILL BE CHARGED. THE VALUE OF ANY UNDERPAYMENTS, PAYMENT HOLIDAYS OR DRAWINGS YOU SELECT CANNOT BE GREATER THAN THE ACCUMULATED VALUE OF ANY PAYMENTS MADE WHICH BEGINS YOUR NEXT MONTHLY PAYMENT DATE. LPS BY NOTICE OF YOUR INTENTION TO TAKE A PAYMENT HOLIDAY OR TO MAKE AN UNDERPAYMENT OF YOUR MONTHLY MONTHLY PAYMENT, PAYMENTS MUST BE MADE BY DIRECT DEBIT AND MUST BE AVAILABLE FOR COLLECTION BETWEEN THE FIRST AND TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF EACH MONTH. FULL DETAILS INCLUDING WRITTEN QUOTATIONS ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST. FURTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS AND CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS APPLY. RATES AND INFORMATION CORRECT AS AT TIME OF GOING TO PRINT (APRIL 1999). THE ALLIANCE & LEICESTER MARKETING GROUP, MEMBERS OF WHICH ARE REGULATED BY THE PERSONAL INVESTMENT AUTHORITY OR FSA. ONLY SELLS ITS OWN LIFE ASSURANCE AND INVESTMENT PRODUCTS. ALLIANCE & LEICESTER PLC REGISTERED OFFICE, 47 PARK LANE, LONDON W1Y 4ED COMPANY NO. 16417712 REGISTERED IN ENGLAND, AUTHORISED AS A BANK PURSUANT TO THE BANKING ACT 1987, MEMBER OF THE FINANCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY.

YOUR HOME IS AT RISK IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON A MORTGAGE OR OTHER LOAN SECURED ON IT.

WILLIAM HAGUE made his second visit to Scotland in a week in an attempt to shore up his party's fortunes. Latest polls indicate that the party, which has no Scottish MPs at Westminster, will secure only 11 per cent of first-preference votes on 6 May. Mr Hague said: "Labour have a raft of new taxes all ready in the wings that they would inflict on Scots if unchecked."



CAMPAIGNS
BRIEFING
12 DAYS TO GO

LABOUR AND the Liberal Democrats spent the day attacking each other, despite

the expectation that the two parties will end up in coalition after the election. Lord Steel of Aikwood, the former Liberal leader, urged

electors to give their second vote to his party. "The last thing Scotland needs is a Labour-dominated parliament," he said. The Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar, said: "It is nice of David Steel to acknowledge how strongly we are running. It certainly does not suggest the Lib Dems have much to offer if they are simply looking for votes on the rebound."

MIKE GERMAN, leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats, was accused of overplaying

his assertion that the people of Wales lived in fear of crime. One cynic said: "The only reason people fear crime is because every time they open their door, there's a Lib Dem there."

YESTERDAY'S *Daily Record* carried a front-page picture of a smiling Sean Connery chasing a photographer, with the headline: "You've seen the polls then, Sean." Who knows what might happen if SNP-supporting Connery got his hands on mild-mannered Donald Dewar?

Adoption law to be tighter

TOUGHER RULES protecting children brought to Britain from abroad for adoption were backed by MPs yesterday and could be law by the end of the year.

Under the new legislation it will be an offence to bring a child into the country without the prior approval of the proper authorities and adoption agencies. It will also entitle adopted children to automatic British citizenship if one parent was British at the time the adoption was made.

Opening the second reading of his Adoption (Inter-country Aspects) Bill, Mark Oaten, the Liberal Democrat MP for Winchester, said the legislation would send a clear signal to those trying to avoid the rules that "bringing a child into this country in the back of a car late at night into Margate, will result in prosecution".

The same standards should be applied to those seeking to

PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL
By SARAH SCHAEFER
Political Reporter

adopt from abroad as at home, he said. "Regrettably there are estimated to be about 100 cases each year where people try to avoid the adoption procedures and bring children into the UK without being properly assessed to become adoptive parents."

Endorsing the Bill, John Hutton, a Health minister, said the Government recognised the need for legislation as the circumstances of adoption had changed considerably since the 1976 Adoption Act. "Inter-country adoption has been growing steadily in recent years, providing an option for people who cannot have children of their own or who wish to extend their existing families," he said. "It is the Government's view that the opportunity to adopt from overseas should continue to be facilitated."

For too long adoption had been seen as a "last resort", which was a "misconception", he said. "Adoption must be seen as a positive option for children... for some children it provides a fresh start and possibly the only opportunity of experiencing family life."

David Chaytor, Labour MP for Bury North, said the Bill was "extremely timely" because the Kosovo crisis would "inevitably encourage more people in Western Europe, and the United Kingdom particularly, to take an interest in this issue out of a genuine humanitarian response to many, many thousands of individual personal tragedies".

Alan Duncan, a Tory health spokesman, said the Opposition welcomed the Bill. "This country does need a proper legislative framework for inter-country adoption and the sooner we get it the better."

The Bill was given an unopposed second reading.



Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, relaxing with pupils at Beaufort school, near Hexham, Northumberland, during a visit to mark World Book Day
Mike Scott/North News & Pictures

Ousted MP in setback

NEWARK VACANCY
By ANDREW GRICE
Political Editor

FIONA JONES, the former MP for Newark, suffered a setback yesterday in her legal battle to resume her Commons seat.

The High Court was told that the Commons Speaker and the Attorney General were both "neutral" over whether a by-election should be held in Newark to fill the vacancy created when she was convicted for making a false declaration over her election expenses. Mrs Jones had hoped to receive a "positive" declaration.

Although Mrs Jones won her appeal, the Commons authorities are applying to the High Court to clear confusion over whether a vacancy can be filled without a by-election. If there is a contest, she is unlikely to be chosen by Labour as the party's candidate.

Yesterday's hearing was adjourned and a full hearing is expected to be held next week.

So now we know, Lilley is for turning

THE DEPUTY leader of the Conservative Party, Peter Lilley, has faced a barrage of almost universal criticism and ridicule from Tory backbenchers and several members of the Shadow Cabinet for his change of tone towards health and other public services.

His speech, given earlier this week for true believers to celebrate (slightly early) the 20th anniversary of Baroness Thatcher being elected prime minister, was certainly ill-timed. Emphasising that there is more to life than defending and extending the free market he declared: "There are distinct limits to applying the free-market paradigm in the public services."

The speech had the full approval of William Hague but harsh criticism of it came from Eric Forth and Edward Leigh of the No Turning Back Group, who led the attacks on him at the 1992 Committee.

Mr Lilley is still a member of the group, of which he was a founder member in 1983, but he failed to attend its monthly dinner two days after the speech and members were angry that he was kicking away the Thatcherite ladder, up which he had climbed to prominence. Even Alan Duncan, a close friend of Mr Hague, was furious that Mr Lilley had cut the ground from under his feet.

Only three weeks ago, Mr Duncan, a health spokesman, issued a Central Office press release of a much-praised speech on health care he had given to the Social Market Foundation.

In it he said: "The NHS cannot do everything, so there will always be more to be done. This requires us to define a Conservative philosophy of health care... we need to add a thriving personal sector to the public sector NHS we already have."

Mr Lilley himself has a mass of words for eating, not least in the lecture he gave in 1989 just before he secured his cabinet place. Speaking on "Thatcherism - The Next Generation" he dealt with market forces in the public sector services. He said: "Every individual is a market force. It is true that the principles of choice, reward for quality and devolution of responsibilities have not been allowed to operate within the state health and education systems. But it is not clear why these principles should be anathema."

Tuesday's £125-a-head dinner at the London Hilton Hotel for 1,000 of the faithful was like a revivalist rally for the *ancien régime* but only included 22 Tory MPs.

The meal was held to mark (two weeks early) the anniversary of the Conservatives coming to power in 1979 and everyone, including Sir Edward Heath, was on their best behaviour.

Revealing that she could never have made it to the top without her husband, Sir Denis Thatcher, "let alone go on and on and on", Lady Thatcher described his reaction when she told him she



THE WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

MICHAEL BROWN

intended to seek the party leadership. "He said, 'Good Lord! You must be mad, but I'll support you all the way'." Lady Thatcher continued: "I suspect that Ted Heath would agree with at least half that statement."

There was something for everyone in a speech that recalled the glory days but offered strong support to the Government on the Balkan war. Both John Major and Lord Hurd of Westwell, who were absent, faced strong implied criticism.

"Appeasement has failed in the Nineties as it failed in the Thirties," she said. "For eight years I have called for Serbia to be stopped. The West could have stopped Milosevic in Slovenia or Croatia in 1991 or in Bosnia in 1992."

ATTEMPTS BY this column to obtain speeches, lectures and articles, written by Peter Lilley during his Eighties days as an unreconstructed Thatcherite, drew a blank at Conservative Central Office.

Presumably to rewrite history and erase all memories of his past policies and speeches, the party bookshop, which was once housed in the reception area at Smith Square, has been abolished. Frantic searches for old No Turning Back Group pamphlets and Centre for Policy Studies lectures given by Mr Lilley ended, finally, with a single phone call to Labour's Millbank headquarters.

Within minutes a thick wad of such publications landed, with a thud, at The Independent's nook in the Press Gallery. All carefully indexed with the Labour Party Library stamp, they are now more likely to be read by Labour ministers, as old Tory favourites such as the Private Finance Initiative for Hospital Building, stalled under the Tories, gain fresh momentum under this Government. Students of free market economics are now beating a path to Millbank, which has one of the best libraries of past Conservative Party publications.

Labour Party officials refuse to be drawn, however, on whether copies of the old Labour constitution - complete with Clause Four - were also still available.



So, seriously. What kind of lifestyle are you going to enjoy

when you retire? Or are you going

to enjoy retirement at all? If the

question makes you want to turn the

page, read on. We really do need

to talk. You're probably old enough

to know better, and young enough

not to care. But think for a minute.

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who can make a difference to your

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DIRECT

Irn Bru girds its loins for Coca-Culloden

BY JACK O'SULLIVAN
Scotland Correspondent

IRN BRU, the fizzy drink, "made in Scotland from girders", is heading for battle with Coca-Cola. The American multinational confirmed this week it is determined to crack Scotland which, alone among the world's nations, has failed to make Coke its favourite drink.

A special Coca-Cola sales team has been recruited to dislodge Irn Bru from the number one spot. "The new team," said a Coca-Cola spokesman, "is already up and running."

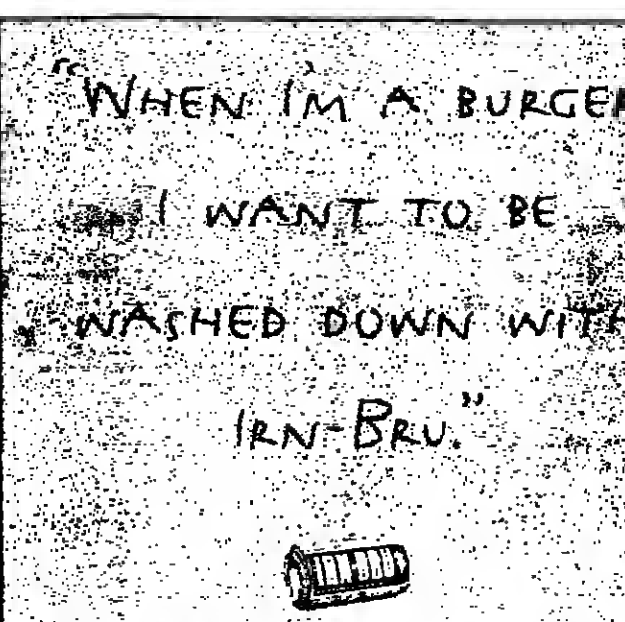
The plan is to expand production at the company's only plant in East Kilbride. One tactic will be Coca-Cola's policy of "localisation", tailoring promotions to local markets. As sponsors of Euro 96 and the World Cup Finals, Coca-Cola ran competitions in the Scottish media offering the prize of tickets for Scottish matches.

Coca-Cola, cagey this week for fear of upsetting potential buyers, is confident that its new marketing stormtroopers will make an impact in Scotland. And there is much to fight for. Scotland has the highest per capita spending in Britain on soft drinks. It is said that, in parts of Glasgow, some households drink nothing else; no tea, coffee or water, just large bottles of Irn Bru.

Irn Bru, though dwarfed by Coca-Cola, is a highly profitable business and ready for a



Irn Bru, which has recently moved away from its traditional image with a series of 'hip' adverts, which have, according to journalist Pat Kane, 'descotified' the drink



related accidents. For years Irn Bru maintained that manufacturing image, then the Leith Agency in Edinburgh took over the drink's advertising in the Nineties.

Gerry Farrell, creative director explained: "The old 'made from girders' image means nothing to a London kid who is into Hip Hop and wears Tommy Hilfiger clothes. We had to provide a crash course in Irn Bru. We think we can reach out to these people better than Coca-Cola can. We cannot outspend them so we have to out-think them."

The result of all this, said Pat Kane, is that Irn Bru has been "descotified". "The danger is that Coca-Cola, by using its policy of localisation, will make its drink look Scottish."

Irn Bru, despite the bravado of its advertising agency, is a little shaken. "This story emanated from Coca-Cola and Barr Soft Drinks have no further comment to make," said its spokeswoman. The drink, however, retains a crucial advantage, said Pat Kane. "Coca-Cola could never be advertised as a hangover cure."

fight. Last year its owner, Lanarkshire-based AG Barr, had a turnover of £107m and opening up operations in Russia, sold a million bottles in its first year.

The recipe, like that for Coca-Cola, is a secret and only two men are thought to know how to mix the 32 ingredients. One of them is Robin Barr, the chairman of AG Barr, and the other is his cousin Michael Barr. The drink's taste is hard to define, although aficionados like it to liquefied Juicy Fruit chewing gum.

The battle to shake up the sweet drinks market could be bitter for Coca-Cola, according to Pat Kane, the Scottish journalist and singer with the band Hue and Cry.

He highlighted the coun-

try's attachment to the traditional Sunday morning breakfast of four Paracetamol and a bottle of Irn Bru. "It's a great hangover cure," he said. "We love to stodge ourselves up with lots of junk and the sugary

stuff sticks to the ribs the best." A long-standing grudge persists between Coca-Cola and Irn Bru, which MacDonald's preferred to offer in its Scottish outlets until Coca-Cola objected. Irn Bru advertising

has made fun of its rival's relative unpopularity. In one advertisement, featuring a cow, the slogan reads: "When I become a burger, I want to be washed down with Irn Bru."

To beat off the competition AG Barr has in recent years given the product an image makeover. It was originally developed as a non-alcoholic beverage for "puddles" who stirred vats of molten iron and were prone to nasty, alcohol-

Salmon catch at record low

LAST YEAR'S catch of spring-run salmon in England and Wales was the worst on record, the Environment Agency revealed yesterday.

The figures confirm the spiralling decline of the species and indicate that wild salmon stocks are at critically low levels.

The agency said they justify the controversial catch-and-release bylaws brought in this month, which for the first half of the season stop all netting in England and Wales, and compel anglers to return all fish alive to the water.

In the season up to 1 June 1998, English and Welsh anglers reported taking only 758 fish, compared to 1,381 in 1997 and 2,691 in 1996. Catches by netmen suffered a similar decline, with only 832 fish taken in the 1998 early season, compared to 1,528 in 1997 and 2,913 in 1996.

In 1989 the rod catch in the season to June was 3,199 fish, with 4,742 taken in nets.

On individual rivers the decline over the last two decades has been catastrophic. In 1978,

BY MICHAEL MCCARTHY
Environment Correspondent

early-season anglers on the Severn took 718 fish; last year they took 76. On the Wye, 20 years ago the corresponding catch was 3,684; last year it was 78.

Dr David Clarke, the agency's head of fisheries, said the figures were a clear sign the new regulations are needed. "The shortage of larger salmon, especially those running early in the year, reinforces the need for the bylaws that came into force on 15 April," he said.

But the new restrictions have been controversial. On the Severn and Wye they have halted use of a fishing trap used since Saxon times, the putcher, once made of willow branches but now often made of steel.

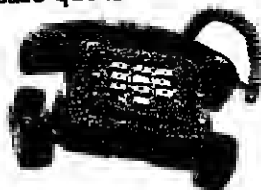
John Walters, a putcher fisherman on the Severn whose season has been shortened by six weeks, said the agency was depriving him of his livelihood. "I'm unhappy about it," he said. "They say the stocks are bad but that's not what we say."

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NATIONAL SAVINGS

Blackadder made the official hero of English history

VISITORS to the Millennium Dome will have the chance to see Cate Blanchett, Dame Judi Dench and Miranda Richardson jostling for the throne as the true Elizabeth I in a special Blackadder version of British history. The first new episode of the show for 10 years will be viewed by 50,000 people a day on Britain's biggest movie screen.

Rowan Atkinson, Tony Robinson - who plays the much put-upon sidekick Baldrick - Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie will join a crowded cast of stars to tell a flawed version of the nation's history.

The film, provisionally titled *Blackadder Back And Forth*, will see the regular cast travel backward and forward in time to take part in key historical events. These include the building of a prehistoric children's playground at Stonehenge, an incident in which Baldrick causes the beheading of Charles I and a Battle of Hastings with a new outcome.

"Blackadder finds himself in a time machine modelled on drawings from a book by Leonardo da Vinci," the executive producer, Geoffrey Perkins, said. "Unfortunately, it has been built by Baldrick out of empty Weetabix cartons and they spend their time struggling to get back to the present

BY PAUL MCCANN
in Montreaux



Cate Blanchett: Will be on screen at the Dome

day." The film is to feature characters from contemporary British culture, and the producers hope to sign up the footballer David Beckham so they can recreate his sending off against Argentina in the 1998 World Cup.

Other stars likely to appear include the generation of British comedians who became famous partly thanks to the four original series of *Blackadder*. These include Rik Mayall, Adrian Edmondson, Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders. The film will be written by the orig-

inal authors of *Blackadder*, Ben Elton and Richard Curtis, who took time out from scripting *Notting Hill* to work on the project.

"A lot of the jokes and the storyline are unfinished," said Tony Robinson when announcing the film at the Montreaux Television Festival. "But that was the way we always did it. It was a collaborative venture and was often left until the last minute."

Queen Elizabeth I will be a major character in the film and the producers hope to sign up the award-winning actresses who have played her in recent years. "Blackadder wants to find out this time whether Elizabeth was a virgin queen or a big ginger tease," said Mr Perkins.

The film is a collaboration between the BBC, which is providing Mr Perkins, its head of comedy, the independent production company Tiger Aspect and BSkyB, which is sponsoring the Millennium Dome's entertainment zone, Skyscape. The film will be shown on two screens 20 metres wide, in cinemas each capable of seating 2,500 people at a time.

On television, the four *Blackadder* series lampooned the Plantagenets, the Tudors, the Georgian Regency and the First World War.



Rowan Atkinson as Blackadder with Tony Robinson as the put-upon Baldrick in the television series BBC

Sir Nigel to play 'Lear' in Japan

BY DAVID LISTER
Media and Culture Editor

SIR NIGEL Hawthorne is to star as King Lear in a production of the play by the Japanese director, Yukio Ninagawa.

Sir Nigel's first leading stage role since his knighthood will be one of the highlights of the coming Royal Shakespeare Company season. The RSC is co-producing the play with Thelma Holt, a West End theatre producer.

A Japanese actor will play the Fool, and the production will open in Japan in September before transferring to the Barbican in London and then to Stratford-upon-Avon.

Announcing the RSC's winter season yesterday, the anniversary of Shakespeare's birthday, Adrian Noble, artistic director, said the success of the film *Shakespeare in Love* "can do nothing but good for the theatre". Twenty of the actors in *Shakespeare in Love* had "considerable RSC pedigrees" and most of the costumes were hired from its wardrobe.

He added: "I think the cinema has just about caught up with this matter of Shakespeare. In the 19th century the great popular art form in Europe was opera and the composers like Puccini and Verdi pillaged Shakespeare for stories, themes and characters."

Life for bus driver who killed boy, 8

BY ANDREW BUNCOMBE

A BUS driver who befriended an eight-year-old passenger and let him hand out bus tickets before sexually abusing and then murdering him was jailed for life yesterday.

After 13 hours' deliberation, a jury found 28-year-old Darren Vickers, from Gorton, Greater Manchester guilty of murdering Jamie Lavis on 5 May 1997.

The boy's dismembered remains were found on a golf course in Stockport, Greater Manchester, five months after his disappearance.

No cause of death was ascertained and there was no forensic science evidence to link Vickers to the killing.

Yesterday at Manchester Crown Court, Mr Justice Forbes told Vickers his crimes were "truly wicked".

He said: "Jamie's brief life was cruelly and prematurely brought to an end because he had the tragic misfortune of boarding your bus. You manipulated the family, the press and the police. You lied and lied and lied again."

During the seven-week trial, the court had heard how Jamie, from Ashton-under-Lyme, had boarded Vickers' 219 bus in nearby Openshaw after he became bored staying at home on a bank holiday.

Vickers allowed him to change gear and count change. He also gave him money to buy drinks, ensuring that the child stayed on his bus all day.

Passengers saw Vickers ruffle the boy's hair, and another driver saw Jamie with his face pressed against the window of the driver's cabin. The court



Jamie Lavis, 8, was 'befriended, groomed and effectively seduced' before being killed by Darren Vickers



was told that, all along, Vickers was "grooming the boy for his own base motives".

When the day ended, Vickers drove the boy to Dukinfield, where he collected his car. Shortly afterwards, at an unknown location, he stripped and abused the boy, murdered him, dismembered the body and then concealed his remains. The boy's head and some of his limbs have never been found.

In a perverse twist, Vickers then ingratiated himself with the boy's family. During the high-profile search for Jamie, Vickers was filmed for TV news bulletins comforting the family and appealing for information.

Vickers used a radio scanner to listen for information on the search for Jamie and would turn up at reported sightings before the detectives.

He also claimed to have started a sexual relationship with the boy's mother, Karen

Spoooner - something she denied vehemently.

Brian Leveson QC, for the prosecution, told the court only two people really knew what had happened after Vickers lured the youngster into his car. "Jamie Lavis isn't here to tell us, and his attacker hasn't told us yet," he said.

After yesterday's decision, Ms Spooner said she felt relieved. "I don't really want to say how I feel," she said. "I hate the sight of him. Jamie can rest in peace now. We have got what we wanted. I hope [Vickers] suffers like I have suffered with my family for the last two years."

Mr Justice Forbes praised Detective Superintendent Roy Rainford and his colleagues at Greater Manchester Police for their hard work on the case. He also thanked two children, Zoe and Ashley, who helped the police to catch Vickers, and awarded them £150 each from public funds for their help.

Younger adults hardly ever speak to neighbours

A QUARTER of people aged under 35 rarely or never speak to their neighbours, according to research published today.

A report by Royal Mail revealed they are more likely to keep in touch with someone on the other side of the world, with more than a third making regular contact with a friend or relative overseas.

A third of young adults only occasionally exchange pleasantries with a neighbour, the Royal Mail's 21st Century Family report showed. But more than 70 per cent of over-55s

often chat with people living nearby and more than half say they are close friends.

Nearly a third of under-35s say they would not know their neighbour if they saw them, would only offer to help a neighbour if it was absolutely necessary and do not want to get to know them any better.

Stephen Davis, director of international communications for Royal Mail said: "The global village continues to shrink and in these days of improved

communication we are just as likely to feel we are 'neighbours' with someone across the world as across the street."

The report also revealed people live further away from relatives now than in the past, although most still live within an hour's journey. It showed that 72 per cent of grandparents still see their grandchildren at least once a week.

Just over one-third of adults in Britain would like to live abroad in the future, with the US, Australia and Spain the favourite destinations.

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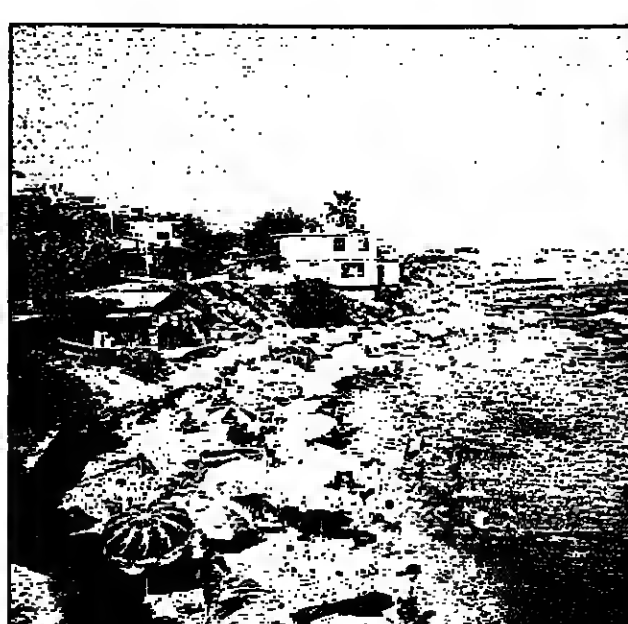
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Bookings to Dubrovnik in Croatia (left) and Ionian islands such as Corfu (above) have been hit by worries about the Balkans war. Terrorist threats in Turkey (second right) and unrest in Jamaica (right) have also scared off tourists

Great places to visit, but no one wishes they were here

HOLIDAYMAKERS who have not yet booked their summer holidays could be in line for the pick of thousands of bargain breaks. With one week to go before the main summer season begins, Britain's mass-market travel companies are offering big discounts as they try to offload unsold package holidays. The situation is so grim that the launch of summer 2000 holiday brochures, expected this week, has been postponed because of poor sales this season.

BY SIMON CALDER
Travel Editor

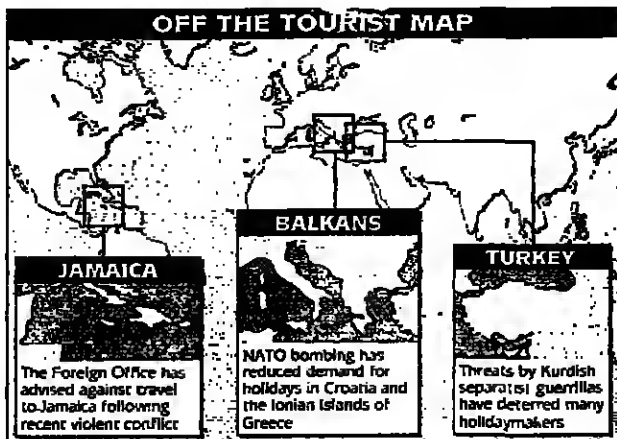
Optimistic forecasts within the travel industry have been confounded by recent events. Demand for holidays in Croatia and the Ionian islands of Greece has fallen sharply because of the conflict in the Balkans. In Turkey, the threats by Kurdish separatist guerrillas against tourists have deterred many holidaymakers. Further afield, a Foreign Office announcement on Wednesday advising against travel to Jamaica has also hit bookings. The government warning came after demonstrations against increased fuel tax on the Caribbean island spread into violent conflict. Roadblocks were set up on several main highways, including the only link to the airport in the capital, Kingston. The first British Airways flight from the airport since last Sunday touched down at Gatwick yesterday.

As if this wasn't bad enough, Richard Branson's latest enterprise, Virgin Sun, has cut flight-only fares to £99 return to a range of Mediterranean destinations in May. Other operators are offering self-catering deals for as little as £129 for a week. Prices are likely to fall still further in the remaining days before peak season schedules begin next Saturday. Britain's biggest holiday company, Thomson, is trying to weed out customers bunting

last-minute bargains from those who book higher-priced holidays from brochures. The company has begun charging late-bookers a £10 fee for coach transfers between the destination and the resort, and reduced their baggage allowance by 5kg to 15kg. If last summer's pattern is repeated, the move will milk an extra £4m from 400,000 last-minute holidaymakers. Upmarket operators have also been left with unsold holidays. Simply Tuscany & Umbria, a villa specialist recently taken over by Thomson, has cut prices in half to fill flights and accommodation in Italy during the first half of May.

Thomson is determined not to lose in the battle for market share, even if this means slashing prices still further. It has warned its nearest rival, Airtours, that it will cut holiday prices if necessary. Airtours, meanwhile, is considering a bid for another big tour operator, First Choice. If

successful, the resulting company would become the UK's market leader. Virgin Trains is cashing in on the total eclipse in south Devon and Cornwall on 11 August. The rail company has more than doubled some rail fares to



the South-west for the week of the eclipse. Low-price tickets are being removed from sale, leaving Supersaver fares as the cheapest available. Travellers between Birmingham and Penzance will have to pay an extra £45.

complex. These entrepreneurs are now making money hand over fist. Most of the money comes from export earnings garnered from fashion, music, marketing and, overwhelmingly, information technology. Dubliners stuck in old-style, fixed-salary jobs have not seen the same gains, and the result is an increasingly two-tier society in which property prices have spiralled beyond the reach of those on more modest incomes.

Mandelson aide feared worst £1m homes go within hours

PETER MANDELSON'S closest aide suspected all along that he would have to resign from the Government if his secret £373,000 loan from Geoffrey Robinson became public. Benjamin Wegg-Prosser, former special adviser to Mr Mandelson, believed that his boss would be bounded out of office by the media even had he not breached the rules on ministerial conduct. In a television programme tomorrow, Mr Wegg-Prosser says he knew there would be "a

lot of pressure" on Mr Mandelson "because the newspapers would put a certain construction on it which would not look good for him and which would make it difficult for him to stay in government".

Mr Wegg-Prosser's father, a solicitor, had drawn up the loan agreement between Mr Mandelson and Mr Robinson, the former paymaster general. Robert Harris, the author

and a close friend of Mr Mandelson, tells the same programme that the former secretary of state for trade and industry was not focusing on the loan because he had been "outed" as a homosexual by Matthew Parris on television. "He was, in the period before the [loan] revelation was made, worried about his private life," Mr Harris says. "He was focused on that. Actually, nobody cares about sexuality in politics any more. They do - oddly enough - care about money and

he followed the wrong ball." Politicians interviewed suggest Mr Mandelson will make a cabinet comeback. Lord Sawyer, the former Labour general secretary, says Mr Mandelson could "flower again" and be better off after two years "doing the nuts and bolts" of an MP's job. The Real Peter Mandelson will be shown on Channel 4 at 8pm tomorrow. It is presented by Donald MacIntyre, whose biography, Mandelson, is published by HarperCollins.

DUBLIN'S BOOMING economy reached a new high-water mark when 16 new homes - each with a £1m price tag - were sold yesterday within hours of going on the market. The buyers were mainly professional couples in their 30s, prompting acid comments about the Republic's emerging young "O'Ligarchy". The houses are in the southern suburb of Carrickmines, many miles from central Dublin where a forest of construction cranes has

sprouted as evidence of Ireland's remarkable renaissance. The country is expected to have growth of 8 to 10 per cent in 1999. This is admittedly down from an unparalleled 12 per cent last year, but it builds on double-digit growth stretching back almost to the beginning of the decade. House prices across the Irish capital doubled between 1994 and 1997, and, in some cases, have doubled again

since. The price of a standard semi in outer suburbia now begins at £130,000 - beady gains from the days when artisan dwellings barely a mile from Molly Malone's statue in the town centre sold for only £42,000. The financial muscles of the young people behind the property boom stem from a surge in entrepreneurship. This, in turn, is the fruit of a hugely improved education system and the shedding of a one-time national inferiority

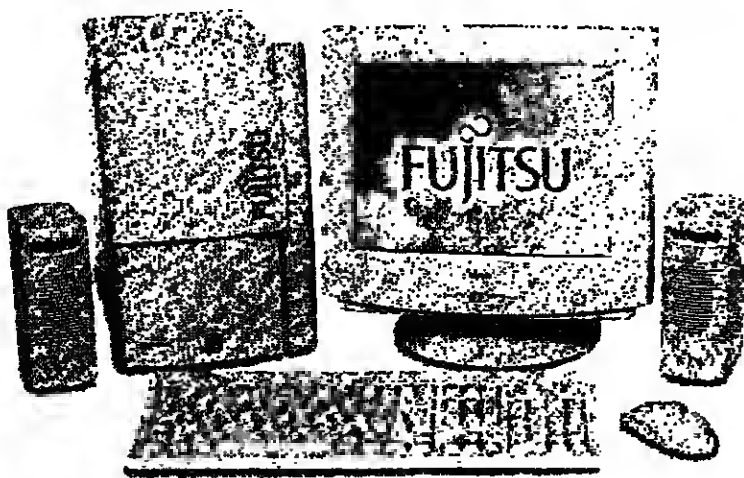
complex. These entrepreneurs are now making money hand over fist. Most of the money comes from export earnings garnered from fashion, music, marketing and, overwhelmingly, information technology. Dubliners stuck in old-style, fixed-salary jobs have not seen the same gains, and the result is an increasingly two-tier society in which property prices have spiralled beyond the reach of those on more modest incomes.

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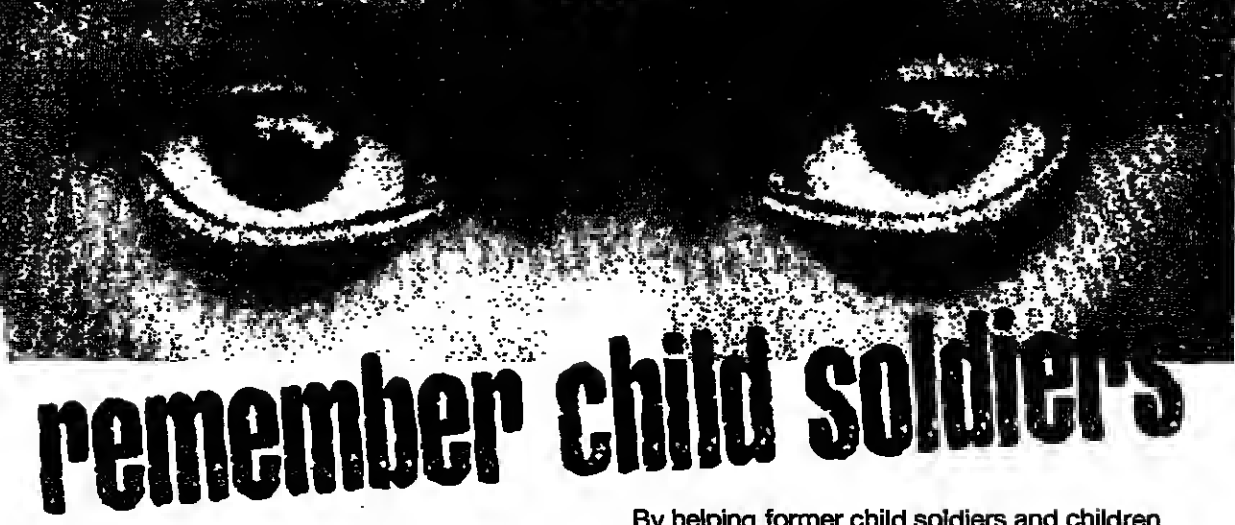
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Ghetto priest rallies Jamaican poor

THEY CALL him the Ghetto Priest, something of a male version of Mother Teresa, most often seen tramping Kingston's slums in white robe, blue sash and sandals. The fact that he has written a number-one reggae single and dozens of musicals, and writes a newspaper column, gives him considerably more street cred than your average clergyman.

Now, Father Richard Ho-Lung, a soft-spoken, white-haired 59-year-old Jamaican, is at the forefront of protests against sweeping tax and price rises. Nine people died in this week's demonstrations. It was the worst violence in Jamaica in 20 years and sent shivers around the economically struggling Caribbean.

Father Ho-Lung, Jamaican-born but whose oriental features lead strangers to think he is a Buddhist priest, insists he wants to stay out of politics but he is already being compared by diplomats in the region to Haiti's Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the Catholic priest who swept to his nation's presidency at the start of the decade.

At an unprecedented protest meeting of Jamaican church leaders on Thursday, Father Ho-Lung, founder of the Missionaries of the Poor group, launched a fiery attack on the government's tax and price increases and what he said was the abandonment of the poor in Jamaica and elsewhere in the Caribbean. "There must be a full rollback of the price rises.

BY PHIL DAVISON
in Kingston

I am talking right now," he told several hundred people from various religious dominations in Kingston's Liguanea park. "Now! Now! Now!" the crowd chanted as he held his microphone out towards them, pop singer-style.

"Don't you think they [government leaders] should maybe suffer with us? Don't you think they should take a cut in their wages?" he asked. "The Church is a sleeping giant. If the whole Church were to come together, we'd be 90 per cent of the country. We are not a violent people by nature. We don't want no burning of tyres or blocking of roads. What we want them to say is, 'We were wrong, we made a mistake'."

On Thursday night Prime Minister P J Patterson called him to say he could not personally annul the tax rises announced a week ago and which led to rioting and clashes with police on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Fourteen policemen were injured, six police stations attacked, 152 people arrested, scores of shops looted and dozens of buildings set ablaze. Life was back to normal in most areas yesterday but residents retained roadblocks in several ghetto areas to keep police at bay.

Mr Patterson noted that a five-member "broad-based" crisis committee was reviewing the tax and price rises and



Participants at the Christian Unity for Peace and Justice rally in Kingston calling for an end to the violence in Jamaica

Collin Reir/AP

would announce its findings tomorrow. The government would consider its report on Monday. In the meantime, the opposition Jamaican Labour Party leader Edward Seaga, whose supporters were widely

believed to have encouraged the riots, said protests would continue until the increases were dropped. He called an opposition march for tomorrow.

Father Ho-Lung said the new inter-denominational church

protest movement, Christian Unity for Peace and Justice, would keep up the pressure with a rally in Kingston on 1 May, described as a "day of national atonement".

A tour of four ghetto centres

run by Father Ho-Lung's young "brothers" showed the difficulty of their task. They look after several hundred mentally or physically disabled Jamaicans, as well as dying Aids patients, in areas of Kingston where this

week's violence was worst, where roads are still blocked and where local gang leaders still rule.

If there was ever any doubt about the continuing danger, Brother Savio, a young Indian

volunteer, recited a prayer in his car before we drove into the slums.

After negotiating several roadblocks by driving on pavements or through rubble, he was eventually stymied by a steel girder. Leaders of the local "National Crew" gang showed no sign of removing it so we walked to one of Father Ho-Lung's shelters.

At Thursday's gathering, in front of a large wooden cross draped with a tattered Jamaican flag to symbolise the "distress" of the nation, other clergymen went even further than Father Ho-Lung, stirring their audience into a frenzy with fiery speeches interspersed with hymns and songs including "We shall overcome". It was the first time Jamaica's leading denominations had held a joint gathering.

"We can take no more. We are standing up for nonsense no longer," said a Catholic priest, Father Gregory Ramkissoon. "The poor must come out of the trap of poverty. We must act."

Bishop Tommy Holdsworth of the Greater Grace Temple said: "The people are saying, 'We are hungry. We can take no more'. There is a genuine cry from the people for help."

The Rev Wynlon William, a Baptist minister, said: "Our young people are very disappointed with the leadership of this country. They say our leadership has failed us. It is a shame to see our country has been ruined."

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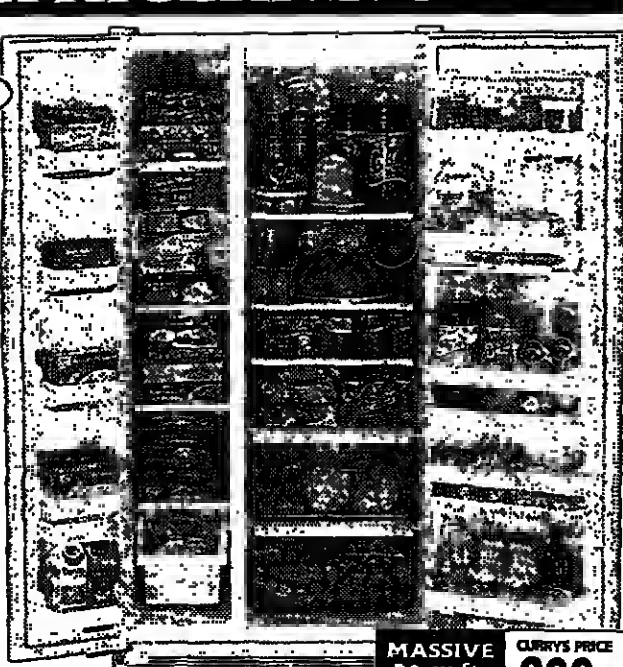


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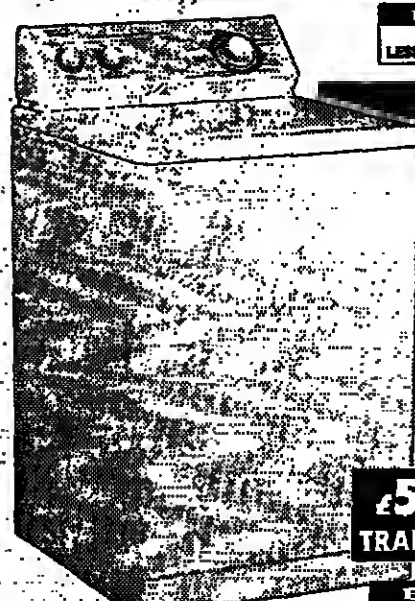
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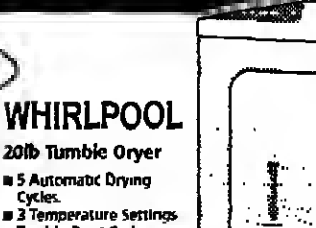


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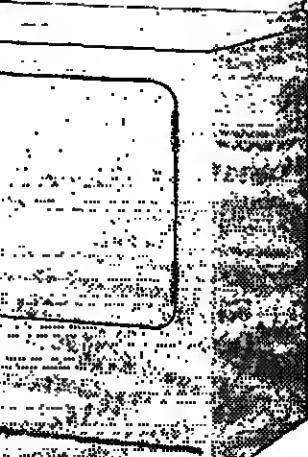
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Test cricketer raped woman in stadium

A CRICKETER in South Africa's World Cup squad was found guilty yesterday of rape.

Makhaya Ntini was convicted of raping a 22-year-old neighbour in the lavatory of a cricket ground in East London after offering her a lift home on 2 December. The 21-year-old international plays in East London, on the east coast, for the Border provincial cricket side.

He has been dropped from the line-up for next month's World Cup tournament in England. The only black African to be selected for the national squad, Ntini played in Australia and England last year.

The United Cricket Board (UCB) managing director, Ali Bacher, said in a statement in Johannesburg that the board was disappointed by Ntini's conviction. "We believe rape is a heinous crime and our previous and current comments on this matter must not be construed in any other light," Mr Bacher said. "We understand there are definite grounds for appeal... The UCB will continue to support Makhaya until the legal process has been completed. Sadly Makhaya Ntini will be withdrawn from the South African squad for the World Cup."

Mr Bacher said the Western province cricketer, Alan Dawson, would replace Ntini. Before

BY JAMES ROBERTS



Ntini: Dropped from team

the judgment the UCB had said the rape charge against Ntini did not affect his eligibility for the national squad.

Ntini, a pace-bowler, sobbed as the verdict was handed down in court.

He was discovered as a raw 15-year-old in Mdiling, a black township near King William's Town near East London.

Raymond Boo, the Border Cricket Board official who first spotted Ntini, said he was devastated. "My heart is broken because he was a model for South African youth," Mr Boo said. "He is a loyal, non-aggressive decent person."

The UCB has been subject to government criticism that the national team is too "white".

Gandhi's power bid thwarted

THE BID for power by Sonia Gandhi's Congress party in India was blown off course yesterday when a number of allies formally declared they would not support her in parliament.

In a meeting with the President K R Narayanan, she was able to offer only 230-odd MPs, which is more than 40 short of an absolute majority. But instead of dismissing her attempts to take power, he urged her to keep trying.

All parties continued to fight shy of a general election, and the efforts to form a workable coalition were continuing.

If, however, no party is successful, a poll will be inevitable. The Italian-born widow of the former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi would then discover whether the Congress party, which has held India in its thrall for almost all the 50 years of the country's independence, can regain power.

After Congress's failure became clear, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) once again staked its claim to office and demanded it should be given another chance to govern.

BY IAN MACKINNON
in Delhi

claiming the support of 270 MPs.

As torch bearer of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, Mrs Gandhi had boldly declared just three days ago that her party had 272 MPs behind her. But several small parties who helped to bring down the BJP-led coalition have steadfastly refused to simply back Congress. The largest, the Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi party, was almost certainly seeking a seat-sharing pact in Uttar Pradesh, where Congress is its main opponent.

Smaller but equally significant are the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the Forward Bloc, which aimed to persuade Congress to adopt a radical left-wing economic agenda.

Congress held out on all the demands, asserting that the only acceptable solution would be it heading a minority government. Yesterday its bluff was called when a Samajwadi party delegation representing its 20 MPs told the president they would vote for neither Congress nor the BJP.

صلى الله عليه وسلم

15 من الامل

High school shooting: Authorities ignored death threats, say parents, as evidence of bullying emerges

Police 'knew boy killers made bombs'

POLICE AND school officials appear to have ignored repeated warnings about Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the Colorado high school killers, and may even have known that the pair were building pipe bombs in the basement of their houses, it emerged yesterday.

The father of a senior at Columbine High School, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the Rocky Mountain News that he had printed out pages from Eric Harris's Internet website more than a year ago and passed them to police because they contained explicit threats to explode bombs and "kill and injure... as many of you as I can".

The father said he was dismayed when police failed to take action and he complained again a few weeks later. "We continually called back," the father said. "They never called us, ever."

This story fits into a pattern of complaints in which parents expressed alarm at threats and intimidation, by Harris in particular, without any apparent response. Brooks Brown, an off-again, on-again friend of the killers who survived the shootings because he was warned away at the last minute by Harris, said his family protested after a death threat against him appeared in the Internet site. Isiah Shoels, the African American student shot dead in the school library, also complained about harassment - although it was not clear if his tormentors were the killers or some other group at the school.

Since Tuesday's carnage, Jefferson County police have consistently denied receiving any warnings. Frank DeAngelis, the principal of Columbine High, said yesterday that he

BY ANDREW GUMBEL
in Littleton, Colorado

was unaware of Harris's website or of any complaints of specific serious threats.

Making his first public appearance since the shootings, a highly emotional Mr. DeAngelis appealed to students and young people everywhere to raise any concerns they have, "so other people don't have to go through what we've been through". Close to tears as he faced the television cameras, Mr. DeAngelis seemed psychologically unprepared to face any shortcomings in his administration, merely saying that Columbine High was a "great school" and would continue to be one thanks to the close-knit family feeling among its students and faculty.

Several present and former students, however, have come forward in the past few days saying that all members of the so-called Trenchcoat Mafia, the introspective clique to which Harris and Klebold belonged, knew how to make pipe bombs. One claimed that the police were aware before the attack that these were being manufactured in the two boys' homes with materials readily available from hardware stores - carbon monoxide canisters, fuses, glass and nails. Gunpowder is highly restricted in Colorado, but is freely available from powerful fireworks on sale across the state line in Wyoming.

Neighbours of Harris have said they heard the sounds of bottles being smashed at his home last weekend, but never suspected they were to be used as shrapnel stuck on to the pair's home-made explosives. "We thought it was a school project or something," one neighbour said.

It is not known where the student's parents or older brother were at the time.

More details also emerged yesterday of the weaponry used in the attack, which included a modified version of a notorious semi-automatic handgun, the TEC-9, much used by street gangs and featured in the movie Robocop. The pair also carried a 9mm semi-automatic carbine, a pump-action shotgun and a sawn-off double-barrelled hunting gun.

According to local media reports, the two semi-automatics were purchased legally from a licensed Colorado gun-dealer, although it seems that Harris and Klebold acquired them through an intermediary because they were too young to buy the weapons themselves.

According to one teenager in Littleton, arranging to buy such weaponry is not difficult. "I have a friend of a friend who could get me a 50-calibre rifle for \$200, or a fully automatic AR15 with bullets with exploding tips - which is totally illegal - for three or four hundred," said the teenager. Joe Costello, who attended a similar Littleton high school for a year and a half before ducking out because of teasing and bullying from the "jocks" - the same group that Harris and Klebold complained about.

Interviews with similar teenagers, who are marginalised in the conservative suburban atmosphere of Littleton, suggested that bullying by jocks is a serious problem. Mr Costello said he had been pushed and beaten repeatedly and had rocks thrown at him, but the school authorities appeared uninterested in protecting him or punishing the well turned out, sporty jocks.



Mourners at a candlelight vigil in Denver for victims of Tuesday's Columbine High School massacre

AFP

China torture ordeal claim

BY TERESA POOLE
in Peking

THE POLICE detained "Yusuf" last year in Urumqi, the capital of China's restive Muslim Xinjiang province, on suspicion that he had links with exiled ethnic Uighur nationalist organisations.

According to his account, there was an underground area below the city's Public Security Bureau where the torture took place. "I was given electric shocks with electric batons. The shocks were applied all over my body, including in my mouth and on my penis, which caused intense pain."

"While tortured I was made to wear a kind of metal helmet which came down over [my] eyes. The interrogators used this helmet to prevent fatalities, as some prisoners cannot bear the pain of torture and try to kill themselves by bashing their heads against the walls," he reported to Amnesty International, which this week published a detailed report alleging "gross and systematic" human rights violations in Xinjiang "which until now have gone virtually unnoticed by the international community".

The 92-page report details widespread torture, extrajudicial killings and other human rights abuses. Some male prisoners reported having horse hair or wires with spikes inserted into their penises.

Ever since the Communist victory in 1949, there have been disparate separatist movements in Xinjiang, angry at the Han Chinese dominion and the exploitation of the region's natural resources for Peking's benefit. A growing number of anti-Han riots, bombings and assassinations have taken place in Xinjiang during the Nineties.

According to Amnesty, Peking's response has been indiscriminate repression. "Yusuf" was one of the relatively lucky ones: he was freed after a few weeks when his family paid police £150.

This week

remember child soldiers

There are over 30 wars being fought in the world. In many, children as young as seven are being used as soldiers. In some cases they're nothing but cannon fodder. It's almost unthinkable - yet today, an estimated 300,000 children are fighting in conflicts around the world. Children who can be maimed, brutalised and slaughtered in adults' wars.

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Your donation can help Save the Children's work to continue. And change the futures not only of child soldiers but other children whose lives have been shattered by violence, poverty and deprivation in places like Liberia, Kosovo and many other countries worldwide. Please remember these children this week, by donating whatever you can afford. Thank you.

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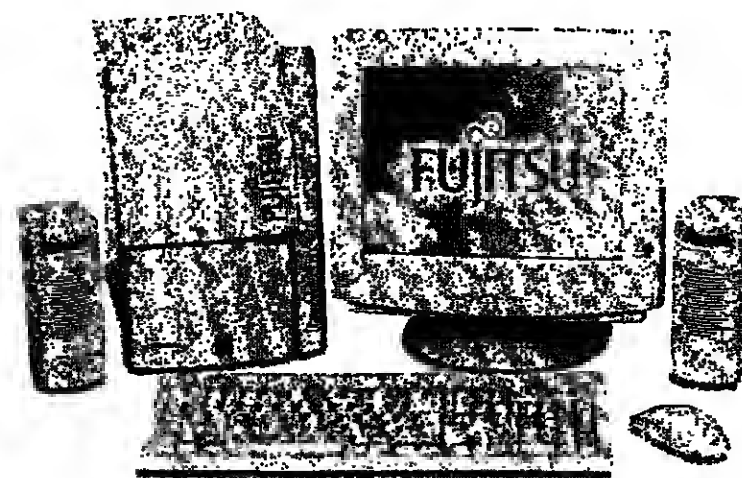
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Refugees waiting for food at Acucareira camp, Angola. About 780,000 people have been displaced in the past year

Nicky de Blois/EP

A UN official offers his own bleak explanation of this latest war: "There is no doubt about it," he says. "This time around the war is simply a battle to see which of the two leaders can steal the most, the fastest, and get away with it."

Business & City Editor, Jeremy Warner
News desk: 0171-293 2636 Fax: 0171-293 2098

BUSINESS

Europe and US head for clash over policy for euro

BRIEFING

Mitsubishi closure costs 240 jobs

THE JAPANESE electronics giant Mitsubishi dealt a fresh blow to Scotland yesterday by announcing the closure of its video recorder manufacturing plant in Livingston with the loss of 240 jobs.

Mitsubishi blamed the shutdown on severe overcapacity in the European video market. The closure is part of a world-wide rationalisation programme involving 14,500 job cuts, and follows Mitsubishi's decision earlier this year to shut its Apricot computer plant in Glenrothes with the loss of 200 jobs.

Bank chief slates bonds tax

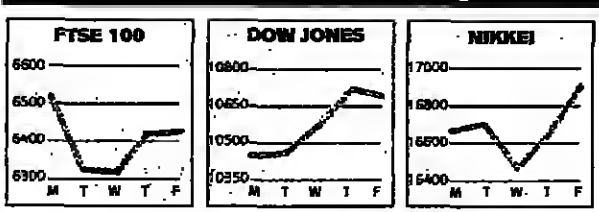


THE deputy governor of the Bank of England yesterday launched a stinging attack on EU proposals to impose a withholding tax on bonds. David Clementi (pictured), speaking at The Economist's UK Financial Services Conference, said that if the tax was imposed "there is a very real danger that legitimate business would relocate, not just outside London but outside the EU, thus further undermining any economic rationale for the proposal". He added: "The Bank continues to believe that it is important to avoid any scheme that would damage EU financial markets."

Kingfisher has bought Dickens, a home and garden retail chain based in the North-east, through its French-based DIY subsidiary Castorama.

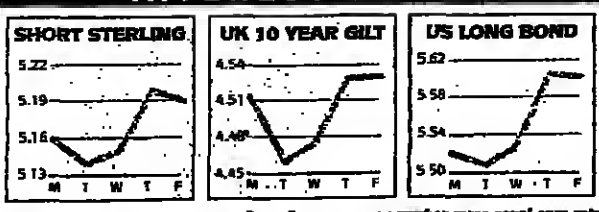
Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed, but Kingfisher said Dickens had net assets of £27m. Dickens' stores in Newcastle, Washington, Darlington and Shiremoor, which have a total of 40,000 square metres of retailing space, are to be converted to its B&Q Warehouse format, Kingfisher added.

STOCK MARKETS



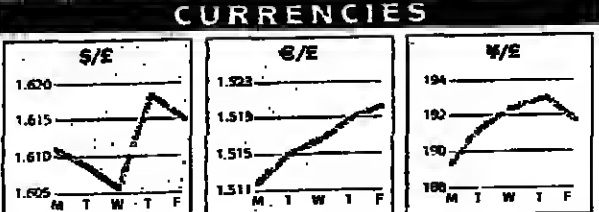
Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	6428.00	14.40	0.23	6539.90	4599.20	2.43
FTSE 250	5784.90	-7.80	-0.14	5970.90	4247.60	3.04
FTSE 350	3070.30	5.20	0.17	3110.80	2210.40	2.58
FTSE All Share	2974.63	5.55	0.19	3010.25	2143.53	2.66
FTSE SmallCap	2522.20	13.90	0.55	2793.80	1834.40	4.22
FTSE Fledgling	1389.20	7.90	0.58	1517.10	1046.20	3.43
FTSE AIM	919.70	0.90	0.10	1146.90	761.30	1.10
FTSE Europe 100	2984.02	-3.94	-0.10	3079.22	2018.15	1.87
FTSE Europe 300	1266.91	-14.82	-1.17	1324.81	980.53	1.92
Dow Jones	10706.98	-30.35	-0.19	10765.74	7490.30	1.49
Nikkei	16923.25	257.37	1.54	17166.06	12262.90	0.75
Hang Seng	12905.30	-28.24	-0.22	13079.50	8947.79	2.71
Dax	5195.42	-23.40	-0.45	5217.83	3833.71	1.58
S&P 500	1356.76	-1.87	-0.14	1362.38	929.32	1.18
Nasdaq	2578.62	17.07	0.67	2830.52	1357.09	0.28
Toronto 300	7012.30	-3.41	-0.05	7377.70	5340.80	1.46
Brazil Ibovespa	11069.08	-14.82	-0.13	11818.20	4573.69	2.55
Belgium Cx20	3233.35	-30.85	-0.94	3713.21	2696.26	2.04
Amsterdam Euxx	561.23	-0.33	-0.06	600.85	366.58	1.85
France CAC 40	4262.43	-28.42	-0.69	4416.00	2881.21	1.69
Spain IBEX35	36513.00	-85.00	-0.23	39170.00	24175.00	1.11
Madrid Iboex 35	9901.60	106.80	1.08	10989.80	6869.90	1.81
Irish Overall	5327.91	-76.63	-1.42	5454.25	3732.57	1.53
S Korea Comp	750.99	10.59	1.43	780.73	277.37	0.92
Australia ASX	3121.70	3.40	0.11	3118.30	2366.70	2.99

INTEREST RATES



Index	3 months	6 months	1 year	10 year	30 year	10 year	30 year
UK	5.34	5.16	5.36	5.13	4.53	4.77	4.77
US	5.00	4.69	5.27	4.80	4.50	5.60	5.60
Japan	0.15	-0.50	0.21	-0.47	1.54	-0.26	2.29
Germany	2.59	-1.05	2.68	-1.26	3.85	-1.08	4.81

CURRENCIES



Index	Close	Change	% Chg	1 yr Ago	5 yr Ago	10 yr Ago
Pound	1.6150	+0.011	0.68%	1.5670	1.4079	1.2857
Dollar	1.5200	-0.04	-2.63%	1.4079	1.2857	1.2857
Euro	192.79	+0.35	0.18%	192.44	129.85	129.85
Yen	104.20	+0.10	0.10%	105.90	108.30	109.10

OTHER INDICATORS

Index	Close	Change	% Chg	1 yr Ago	5 yr Ago	10 yr Ago
Brent Oil (\$)	15.92	-0.26	-1.63%	13.38	11.04	11.04
Gold (\$)	283.15	-0.40	-0.14%	314.05	314.05	314.05
Silver (\$)	5.18	0.08	1.56%	5.32	5.32	5.32

TOURIST RATES

Country	Rate	Country	Rate
Australia (\$)	2.3803	Mexico (nuevo peso)	13.99
Austria (schillings)	20.12	Netherlands (guilder)	3.2278
Belgium (francs)	59.16	New Zealand (\$)	2.8175
Canada (\$)	2.3173	Norway (kroner)	12.21
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8451	Portugal (escudos)	292.23
Denmark (kroner)	10.96	Saudi Arabia (rials)	5.8904
Finland (markka)	8.7851	Singapore (\$)	2.6389
France (francs)	9.6097	South Africa (rand)	9.5007
Germany (marks)	2.8749	Spain (pesetas)	243.27
Greece (drachma)	478.81	Sweden (kronor)	13.13
Hong Kong (\$)	12.09	Switzerland (francs)	2.9581
India (rupees)	1.1527	Thailand (bahts)	55.74
Israel (shekels)	6.0153	Turkey (liras)	597324
Italy (lira)	2848	USA (\$)	1.5712
Japan (yen)	189.32		
Malaysia (ringgits)	5.8915		
Malta (lira)	0.6211		

EUROPEAN FINANCE ministers and the US administration are poised for a clash over sluggish growth in Europe and the weakness of the euro.

US officials are expected to use Monday's meeting of Group of Seven ministers and central bankers to urge their European counterparts to boost growth and to share with the US the burden of soaking up imports from Asia. The weak euro has become a symbol in the US of European economic inaction.

The International Monetary Fund added its pressure yesterday, urging the European

confidence in the monetary framework," the IMF said.

The new currency remains close to its low against the US dollar, hovering just above \$1.06 yesterday. It has lost about 10 per cent of its value against the dollar since the new year. Trading was quiet yesterday ahead of Monday's G7 meeting. Finance ministers arrive in Washington tomorrow in the wake of the weekend Nato summit.

Financial market analysts predict that the euro will remain weak until economic fundamentals on the Continent show signs of improvement. Philippe d'Arvisenet, chief

economist at BNP in Paris, said: "The Americans might put on some pressure, but the currency is just a reflection of economic conditions." Slow growth in Europe compared to faster US growth would keep the euro weak for a few months, he said. The Balkan war also weighs on the euro, analysts said.

However, the suspicion in the US is that Europe is deliberately practising towards its new currency the policy of benign neglect that has served the dollar and US exporters so well. The issue has become sensitive because of the Asian crisis and subsequent explosion

of the US trade deficit. Protectionist sentiment among US producers is rampant.

New figures for the UK economy yesterday confirmed that growth remained sluggish in the first quarter of this year. However, the 0.1 per cent rise in GDP in January to March, to a level 0.7 per cent higher than a year earlier, is widely expected to mark the low point of the business cycle.

According to preliminary figures from the Office for National Statistics, manufacturing output fell during the quarter, but more slowly than in the final quarter of 1998. The figures for

manufacturing output in the first quarter are likely to show a fall of around half the fourth quarter's 1.3 per cent decline.

But if the worst is over for manufacturing, growth in services slowed to its lowest since the trough of the recession in mid-1992. Services output rose 0.4 per cent in the first quarter, taking the year-on-year growth down to 2.3 per cent from 2.7 per cent in the fourth quarter.

Since mid-1992, services output has climbed by 26.7 per cent, compared to a rise of about 8 per cent for manufacturing output.

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Greycoat executives (from left) Peter Thornton, Martin Poole and Chris Strickland

Colin Beere

MAM talks to Greycoat team

THE MANAGEMENT of Greycoat is in talks with Mercury Asset Management (MAM) about a possible buyout of the central London property developer.

MAM, which has a stake in Greycoat's most famous property Tower 42 in the City (formerly known as the Nat West Tower), is expected to make a bid that will see the management retained and offered a share in the equity.

A source close to the deal said: "Although a number of people were prepared to offer management participation, they (Greycoat) are now on the point of doing a deal with a particular institution. The structure of the

BY ANNA MINTON

deal means that management will have participation in the equity.

Greycoat put itself up for sale last week following a hostile £218m bid by Delancey Estates, the property group run by Jamie Ritblat, son of British Land's John Ritblat. The financier George Soros controls nearly 60 per cent of Delancey.

Delancey's all-paper bid was rejected as "derisory" by Greycoat. Analysts say it is looking for a bid of up to £300m for the company, which last week reported a net asset value of 283p per share. The sale process is being arranged by NM Roth-

schild, with tenders invited by 19 May.

Peter Thornton, the chief executive of Greycoat, said: "It became clear very early on that certain parties going to tender wanted the possibility of retaining some or all of management. Of course we'd prefer someone to retain management and save our jobs, but the highest cash bid will win the day."

Analysts and industry observers said that the deal with MAM, reported in property magazine *Estates Gazette*, seemed logical and beneficial to both sides.

Ian Henderson, chief executive of Land Securities, one of the companies tipped to enter

the bidding, said: "It doesn't surprise me because a number of funds are looking for more direct exposure to property. It's got quite a lot of logic to it."

A property director with a leading fund said the deal reflected a structural change in property investment in the UK, with fund management houses increasingly looking to absorb property companies into their businesses.

"We've seen it with Hermes taking over Argent and more recently with Prisco and Arlington, and there'll be more companies seeking to sell themselves to life insurers. It means the listed property sector will shrink," he said.

Barclays' chairman leaves door open to a merger

Shares in Barclays Bank climbed almost 3 per cent yesterday after its chairman indicated the group was open to a merger with a rival.

Speaking at a tense annual meeting, Andrew Buxton, the outgoing chairman, said: "If something arose that was consistent with Barclays' own group strategy and good for shareholders, of course we would consider it." However, he declined to comment directly on recent speculation about a tie-up between Barclays and Royal Bank of Scotland.

Barclays' shares rose 54p to close at 1.935p, with traders also

BY LEA PATERSON

cheered by a bullish statement. "Our business has performed well in the first quarter," Mr Buxton told shareholders.

Despite the upbeat tone of the statement, the Barclays chairman faced some hostile questioning. There was particular concern about the size of the compensation package paid to Martin Taylor, who unexpectedly resigned as Barclays' chief executive at the end of last year.

Mr Buxton took the unusual step of asking Peter Jarvis, chairman of Barclays' remuneration committee, to give

shareholders a short presentation explaining Mr Taylor's pay-out. Mr Jarvis said the package reflected "contractual obligations as well as the success of the business under Martin".

Separate remarks by Peter Ellwood, chief executive of Lloyds TSB, fanned merger speculation in the sector.

Mr Ellwood, speaking at The Economist's UK Financial Services conference, said: "Obviously we would like to buy in the UK, but a really big deal would go against competition rules. Europe is on our doorstep and we are looking pretty hard. We are also looking in the US."

Allied Carpets MD quits after grim trading figures

ALLIED CARPETS, the struggling carpet retailer, lurched further into crisis yesterday when its managing director resigned following another grim trading statement.

Ray Nethercott is stepping down with immediate effect after surviving a management purge last year, when auditors found a black hole in the accounts caused by problems in the way sales were recorded.

Shares in Allied Carpets fell 3p to 36.5p. Analysts said it was left "rudderless" with just two executive directors, including an acting finance director.

Allied Carpets' chairman,

BY NIGEL COPE
Associate City Editor

Julian Lee, said he and non-executive director Mark Burgess would now spend more time at the company supporting the remaining two executive directors.

Mr Lee said: "Ray's resignation brings the opportunity for a fresh start for the company and we will announce a successor as soon as practicable." Mr Nethercott is likely to be eligible for compensation.

Allied Carpets said trading remained "challenging". In 16 weeks to 16 April like-for-like sales were 6 per cent down on

the period last year. This is thought to be in line with the carpet market but a poorer performance than rival Carpetright.

The latest crisis at Allied Carpets could revive bid speculation after the group ended takeover talks last year. However, there may be few bidders.

Carpetright, which made an indicative offer of 67p per share before pulling out due to regulatory concerns, is not thought interested. The company feels it was misled about by Allied over the deal to buy 29 of its stores. The other bidder last year was venture capital group Alchemy.

Outlook, page 19

AROUND THE WORLD'S MARKETS

LONDON

SHARES closed slightly higher yesterday as takeover rumours in the banking and telecom sectors offset Wall Street's weak opening.

The FTSE-100 finished 14.4 higher at 6428.0, on low volume of less than a 1bn shares. A number of market players preferred to sit on the sidelines after Thursday's large gain. Profit-taking took the FTSE-250 7.8 lower to close at 5784.5. The Small Cap ended 13.9 higher at 2522.2, breaking its trading and closing records for 1998. Market Report, page 19

NEW YORK

SHARES fell slightly on profit-taking after the DJIA and Nasdaq hit new highs on Thursday. AT&T fell nearly 10 per cent on worries about the impact of the potential acquisition of MediaOne. In early trading, the Dow was down 46.39 at 10,630.79 while the biotech Nasdaq was off 3.97 at 1,337.64. Mobil fell almost 2 per cent after a fall in first quarter earnings to 58 cents a share. Exxon, its prospective merger partner, was down 1.6 per cent.

TOKYO

THE NIKKEI INDEX closed 1.54 per cent higher at 16,923, boosted by gains in hi-tech issues following a jump in the technology-heavy Nasdaq index in the US overnight. Speculation that the Japanese government may announce extra economic steps to kick-start the economy also helped market sentiment, traders said. "The whole market was pulled up as the fate of Tokyo high-techs is closely tied to overall market performance," said Akishiro Naemura, a strategist at Okasan Securities.

HONG KONG

STOCKS HAD a volatile day's trading, ending modestly lower after earlier hitting their highest level in 18 months. The Hang Seng index peaked in morning trade at 13,364.42 - its highest level since October 1997 - before falling back to close down 28.24 points at 12,905.30. HSBC Holdings was among the most actively-traded stocks, setting a new record high of HK\$290 before falling back to close at \$283.

FRANKFURT

BLUE CHIPS surrendered ground in later trade on a weak opening on Wall Street, with the Xetra DAX index ending down 0.74 per cent at 5,187.89 points. The floor-traded DAX finished off 0.45 per cent at 5,195.42 points. Deutsche Bank shares rose 2 per cent after forecasting a marked earnings increase at its investment banking division as the EU cleared its merger with Banker's Trust. Deutsche Telekom ended 0.2 per cent higher following days of hefty losses.

AT & N's
buzz
into fl

AT&T might untangle the cable knot

THERE'S NEVER a dull moment in the telecommunications industry. No sooner have Telecom Italia and Deutsche Telekom hummed up the aisle intent on redrawing the telecoms map of Europe, than along comes a deal which promises to carve up a significant part of the UK market too.

This time the elephants doing the dancing are AT&T, the daddy of them all, and MediaOne, the US cable operator.

Such is the frenzy of merger activity in the US as the various players jockey for pole position in the information age, that MediaOne was already betrothed to Comcast. Now freed from the constraints of yesterday, AT&T is desperate to recreate the empire that was broken up when the local phone companies, the Baby Bells, were forcibly spun off.

It has already acquired America's second largest cable operator, TCI. Snapping up MediaOne would make AT&T a major player in both the local and long-distance US telephone markets. There are, of course, a few loose ends to tie up. First, it needs to arrange \$30bn of debt financing. Even for a company like AT&T that is a big hit, fol-



OUTLOOK

lowing so soon after the \$60bn TCI deal. Then it needs regulatory approval.

And then, finally, there is the matter of the two transatlantic orphans that AT&T will inherit as part of the deal - a 50 per cent stake in One2One, and a controlling 51 per cent stake in Telewest. Both fit the category of non-strategic assets. Furthermore, both have to be disposed of anyway because of the non-compete agreement that AT&T has with BT - something, incidentally, which the regulators might care to cast an eye over while they are at it.

One2One was already on the block following the decision by Cable & Wireless, the owner of the

other 50 per cent, to become Cable but not Wireless. As for Telewest, the incestuous nature of the UK cable industry and the desperate need of the various players to make a viable whole out of the loss-making parts, means it was never likely to remain in its present form.

The welter of overlapping cross shareholdings make the UK cable market a tricky one to keep up with. C&W also owns a 53 per cent stake in Cable & Wireless Communications, itself the product of a four-way merger. Comcast (remember that one) meanwhile owns a stake in NTL, the other player of any size on the UK cable scene.

A consolidation of the three big cable players into one ought not to make the regulators lose any sleep since they do not compete with one another anyway. What's more, it would make everyone else's life easier. The AT&T bid may just be the catalyst the industry needs.

Euro weakling

HOISTED BY their own petard. When the euro was launched, European finance ministers insisted on reversing the old convention

under which the D-Mark and the franc were quoted in terms of the amount of each currency a dollar would buy, and instead have the euro denominated the other way round - in terms of the number of dollars each euro bought.

The difference might seem an unimportant one, but for the pompously minded men of Europe, it has (or rather had) a certain symbolic significance. Quoted against the dollar in this way, the euro is worth more than one, and therefore might be seen to denote superiority.

Furthermore, because the euro was expected rapidly to establish reserve currency status, and strengthen against the dollar, this method of quotation would more easily illustrate rising value and therefore increased superiority. Embarrassingly, it hasn't worked out that way. The euro has been sinking ever since it was launched. The way things are going, it won't be long before parity is reached. *Sacre bleu!*

However, as luck would have it, a weak euro is just what the doctor might have ordered for near recessionary Europe. The euro's weakness may be a tad embar-

assing for supporters of the new currency, but while it makes Europe's exports cheaper and imports more expensive, nobody's complaining too much.

Nobody, that is, except the Americans, and to a lesser extent, Britain, also labouring under the burden of a strong currency and growing trade deficit. The US plans to give it to the Europeans with both barrels at next week's meeting of the IMF and World Bank in Washington. The US, with its Everest of a trade deficit, seems to be shoudering the entire burden of the world's economic ills right now, and that's what its policy makers think, anyway, and it wants Europe to take some share of the strain.

Unfortunately, it is hard to see how this can occur; there seem to be no policy tools left open to the Europeans. Interest rates have already been cut to a lower level than anyone dreamed possible, while with most euro-zone countries beginning to knock up against budget deficit ceilings, there isn't a great deal of scope for tax cutting either. Deregulation of labour, capital and industrial markets will eventually help stimulate demand, but the full benefit of these measures are

going to take many years to come through. For all these reasons, the euro is likely to remain a weak currency for some while yet.

Narrow miss

THE BRITISH economy expanded by less in the first quarter of this year than any other quarter since the tail-end of the last recession. Yet yesterday's figures were greeted with remarkable cheer. The reason is one of relief: the vast majority of economists think the slowdown in January to March is as bad as it is going to get. We have, they think, achieved the proverbial soft landing.

Better still, the figures indicated that the pace of decline in manufacturing has eased. Unlike other areas of the economy, manufacturers have indeed suffered a recession - technically defined as two successive quarters of falling output - but they now appear to be pulling out of it despite the strong pound. Services output grew even more slowly in the first quarter than in the final months of 1998. But economists draw comfort from all sorts of anecdotal evi-

dence that services are now picking up again.

This evidence ranges from the informal, the reappearance in London's restaurant and shop windows of help-wanted notices, to the more formal - pick-ups in confidence in the biggest business surveys. The housing market has certainly perked up, as net lending and house price figures show.

The biggest remaining worry is how much the strong exchange rate could yet damage exports. It is still just about possible that this could still tip the whole economy into recession. Furthermore, revisions of preliminary data are frequent and large and it might be unwise to put too much faith in yesterday's figures.

But even assuming the worst, it is hard to see the UK economy suffering more than two or three quarters of marginally negative growth. Compared to the scale of boom and bust Britain experienced in the 1980s and early 1990s, this is quite an achievement on the part of policy-makers. It even feels a little bit too good to be true - as if to declare a soft landing is tempting fate. The formal declaration will have to wait until we can be absolutely sure.

S&N's holiday buzz puts fizz into flat FTSE

SCOTTISH & NEWCASTLE, the nation's biggest brewer, was back in demand yesterday after a series of meetings with analysts sparked talk of a sell-off of its Center Parcs holiday business.

S&N surged 39p to 761.5p as the finance director, Derek Wilkinson, toured the City's 'crocking houses' to outline the company's near-term strategy and to rein in some of the more optimistic earnings forecasts. Mr Wilkinson is thought to have hinted at some 'developments' at Center Parcs, S&N's underperforming holiday camps operation.

The business, which owns Pontins in the UK and has operations in Holland, France and Belgium, suffered a slump in reservations a few years back as tourists were put off by its staid image. Since then, it has undergone massive restyling and it appeared to be on the up.

However, recent trading has been poor and Mr Wilkinson was said to have mentioned Center Parcs' disappointing performance as a reason to reduce full-year forecasts. The finance director's caution fuelled speculation that S&N was lining up a sale of the business, which last year produced about £60m in profits on

MARKET REPORT

FRANCESCO GUERRERA

MediaOne spread through the London market. Telewest Communications, where MediaOne has 29 per cent stake, rose 20.75p to 282.75p - the biggest riser among blue-chips.

If AT&T succeeds in buying MediaOne it will end up with a 51 per cent holding in Telewest, which will almost certainly be sold to fund the deal and allay regulatory fears. The UK market leader, Cable & Wireless Communications, already in talks with Telewest on the pooling of their domestic operations, is a potential buyer. CWC rose 22p to 713p on hopes it could go for a £16bn merger.

Cable & Wireless was also wanted, rising 27p to 842p. Traders shrugged aside fears that the AT&T bid could scupper the sale of the mobile phone business One2One, co-owned with MediaOne, and focused on speculation that it could merge with France Telecom.

Colt Telecom missed out on the fun, plunging 36p to 1,102p on profit taking. Reed International suffered the same fate and closed 17p down at 522p. Bid talk returned to swirl around Barclays. The leader-

merger. The supermarket slid 1.5p to 191.5p, while the owner of B&Q was 12.5p higher at 822p. The rumour of a strike by Wal-Mart for Safeway grew stronger as it emerged that Tony Blair had met with an executive of the US giant. The UK group closed 14.25p up at 279p.

The mid-cap was in indecisive mode, ending 7.8 points lower at 5,784.5. The small cap bucked the trend and finished ahead, closing 13.9 higher at 2,532.2 and breaking its 1999 trading and closing records in the process.

Arriva, the transport group, was one of the worst-performing mid-cappers, journeying 20p lower to 415p after warning of a tough bus market.

Takeover rumours enlivened the rest of the undercard. United Assurance, the underperforming life insurer, rose 17.5p to 446.5p on talk of a strike from a rival or a major bank, possibly Lloyds. Hickson, a long-suffering chemical group, was also in demand. It closed 8p higher at 58.5p as old bids resurfaced. The activist fund manager PDFM owns a large stake and could be looking for a buyer.

Another company in the PDFM stable, Cornwell Parker, rose on talk that a bid was near. The reclining chair maker

SHARES IN Arsenal Football Club soared 10,000p to 210,000p yesterday after the Oxfen-traded company announced a new three-year sponsorship deal with the computer group Sega.

The contract allows Sega to publicise Dreamcast, its new video games console, on the Gunners' home and away shirts from next season. The deal, worth about £12m, is thought to be the largest-ever sponsorship for a UK football club.

known to have received an approach, rose 13.5p to 112p. The Coke bottler, Coca-Cola Beverages, firmed 9p higher to 117p on evidence of a buoyant market for the sticky stuff.

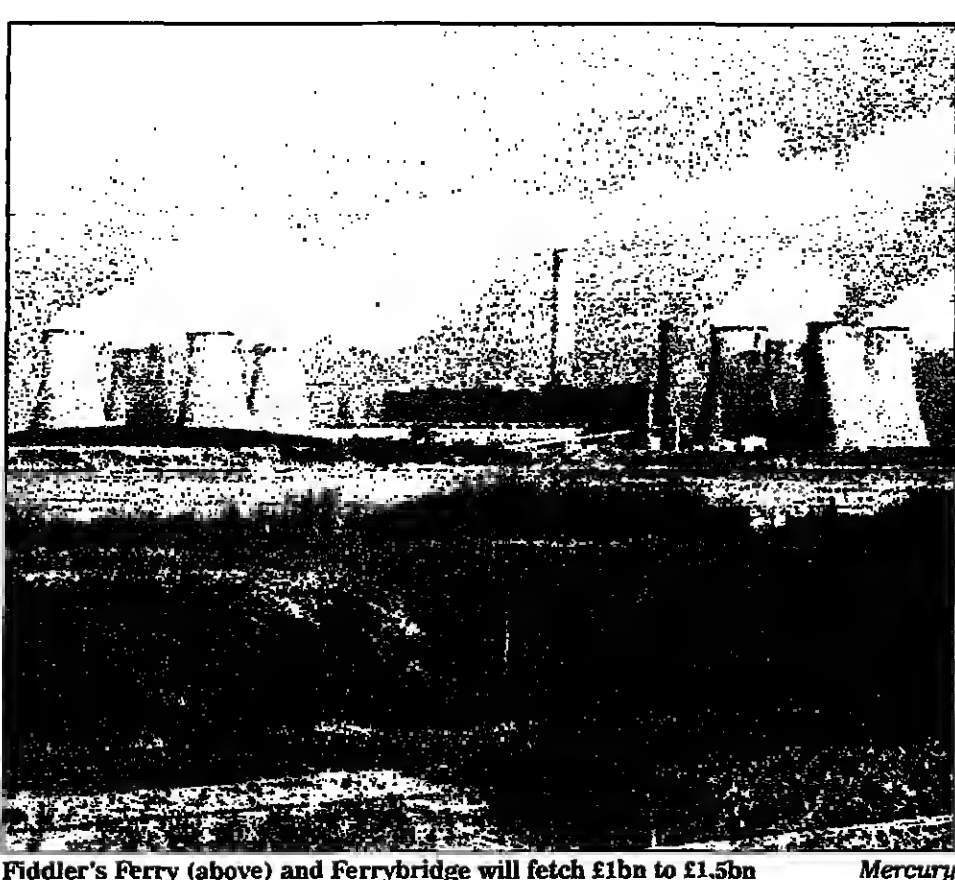
Storehouse, the B&S and Mothercare retailer, flew 7p higher to 148p as speculative buyers moved in.

Profit warnings were the order of the day among the minnows. The convenience store operator, Dawn Tili Dusk, sunk 21.5p lower to 75p after announcing the closure of its "Liquorzones" shops and predicting profits "significantly below" expectations.

The mattress maker Relyon Group sunk 35p to 242.5p after blaming the poor furniture market for a shortfall in profits.

The textile group Dawson International unravelled 2.5p lower to 18p after talking of a tough trading environment.

SEAQ VOLUME: 929m
SEAQ TRADES: 76,343
GILTS INDEX: n/a



Fiddler's Ferry (above) and Ferrybridge will fetch £1bn to £1.5bn

PowerGen lines up US buyer

POWERGEN is poised to announce the £1bn-plus sale of two of its coal-fired power stations to a US electricity company. The UK generator has decided to sell the two stations - Ferrybridge and Fiddler's Ferry - to a single bidder in order to maximise the price.

The two stations will be sold to either NRG or Edison Mission Energy, both of the US, and an announcement is expected

BY MICHAEL HARRISON
Business Editor

to be made early next week.

There had been speculation that the two stations would be sold separately. But PowerGen is understood to have persuaded the Government that in order to create a powerful new competitor in the UK electricity market, it is preferable to have just one buyer.

Edison Mission Energy already owns the pumped storage power stations that were formerly part of National Grid, which may tip the balance in favour of NRG.

The two stations, which each have an output of 4,000 megawatts, are expected to fetch between £1bn and £1.5bn, which will include the coal supplies they are already contracted to buy.

SKB strikes Avandia deal after approval

SMITHKLINE BEECHAM yesterday said it had struck a deal with US competitor Bristol-Myers Squibb to co-promote Avandia, the blockbuster diabetes drug given approval by US authorities this week.

On Wednesday SKB was given the green light to sell the drug by the US Food and Drug Administration's advisory panel, giving it access to the multi-billion dollar market for diabetes treatments.

The FDA ruled the drug was free of any links to unusual liver damage, giving SKB a crucial marketing edge over some type 2 diabetes treatments.

Yesterday a fierce battle for market share was in prospect when the FDA said Actos, a rival to Avandia produced by Eli Lilly and Takeda Chemical, was also not linked to liver damage.

Type 2 diabetes, a condition caused by the inability of the body to respond to natural insulin, affects around 100 million people across the world and 16 million in the US, most of them in the older age brackets.

Type 2 diabetes is the leading cause of adult blindness and kidney failure in the US. The conditions and its complications cause around 500 deaths a day in the US alone.

The new drugs help to reduce

BY ANDREW VERITY

insulin resistance and allow the body to control its own blood-sugar level. SKB has completed more than 20 clinical trials involving 500-plus patients.

Rezulin, the rival drug developed by Warner Lambert, is expected to realise sales of \$750m (£465m) in spite of being linked to serious liver damage. The FDA allows the drug to be prescribed, but only alongside other treatments. Avandia can be used on its own.

Analysts expect Avandia and Actos to realise sales of \$30m between them within four years. Until now there were fears that these might also cause liver problems.

SKB's collaboration with Bristol-Myers Squibb will give Avandia an extra marketing push. Bristol-Myers is currently the market leader in diabetes treatments through its Glucophage product.

Howard Pien, president of SmithKline Beecham Pharmaceuticals, said: "Given the extensive experience of Bristol-Myers Squibb in bringing Glucophage to patients with type 2 diabetes, [we] understand well the urgent need to provide physicians with additional new therapeutic options."

Wassall promises one-year truce on BICC

WASSALL, the bottletops-to-travel goods maker, yesterday made an official promise not to go hostile for at least a year in its £746m bid for BICC, the engineering group, after pressure from the Takeover Panel.

The promise came after a "put up or shut up" order from the panel, concerned about the potential for the bid to disrupt

BY ANDREW VERITY

BICC's business. On Tuesday the panel said Wassall must either go hostile or cease making informal takeover offers for the group by 1pm yesterday.

The group has in the past five months said it is willing to make informal offers of 90p and 110p for BICC. On Thursday, less

than a day before the deadline, it raised the figure to 125p. Yesterday the bid was formally rejected by BICC.

"The requirement comes under rule 35 of the takeover code and it is true to say it is a put-up-or-shut-up type of provision. There is obviously a phoney war which has been going on for some time, which leads to un-

certainties for the offeree company," said a panel spokesman.

The panel's immediate concern stemmed from the forthcoming 4 May extraordinary meeting being held by BICC to approve the £275m sale of its energy cables business. Wassall wants to buy all of BICC.

Wassall indicated it believed it still had a hope of winning

shareholders' favour. But it is now barred from making further informal offers. Alan Jones, chief executive of BICC, said: "This stops them stalking us and it means the issue now is whether we should complete the transaction on the table."

Shares in BICC rose from 107.5p to 108.5p, while shares in Wassall fell 9p to 249.5p.

IN BRIEF

World Telecom to provide Tesco card

WORLD TELECOM yesterday tried to offset disappointing results with the news that it has been chosen to provide supermarket chain Tesco with a branded pre-paid phonecard. Pre-tax losses at the Aim-listed telecoms provider came in at £9.28m, against analysts' forecasts of £7.3m. Analysts said the company was hit by low-margin products taking a larger share of overall sales. Its pre-paid phone cards - 19 per cent up - were hit by competition from BT's Payphone Access Charge, launched in late 1997. The shares closed flat at 58p.

Record losses for Japanese brokers

THREE OF Japan's biggest securities houses yesterday posted record losses for the last financial year. Nomura Securities, the country's largest brokerage, reported a consolidated net loss - calculated under stringent US accounting standards - of 466,900 yen (£2.4m). Daiwa Securities, the number two house, and Nikko Securities, the number three, announced group net losses of 127,900 yen and 177,500 yen respectively. Both Nomura and Daiwa reported healthy profits on their domestic businesses.

Sainsbury's plans new division

SAINSBURY'S is to set up a new commercial division to turn the business around, the group said yesterday. The division will incorporate 80 to 85 staff from the Savacentre head office in Wokingham, Berkshire, which is to close with the loss of up to 230 jobs. Five new senior positions have been created to run the new division. This is the first phase of a full reorganisation of the trading divisions of Sainsbury's supermarkets. The new teams will be effective from 3 May and the full structure will be in place in four months' time.

COMPANY RESULTS

Name	Turnover (£)	Profit (£)	EPS	Dividend	Pay date	YTD
British International (F)	126,447m (133,950m)	-9,281m (9,281m)	-4.6p (8.8p)	-	17.06.99	04.06.99
Domestic Energy (F)	1,000m (1,140m)	-4,070m (-4,070m)	-1.4p (-1.4p)	-	-	-
Overseas Energy Holdings (F)	22,100m (26,570m)	-9,500m (-9,500m)	-0.53p (-0.53p)	0.45p (0.45p)	01.07.99	24.06.99
World Telecom (F)	27,240m (27,240m)	-9,281m (-9,281m)	-3.8p (-3.8p)	-	-	-

(F) - Final (I) - Interim * Before exceptional

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SPORT

The art of remembering what matters most

WHEN YOU put the milk bottles out at night, and the keen air sharpens your senses, and you glance up to a scythe of moon and a dusting of stars, it is only natural to think: how tiny we are in the vastness of the universe. How strange this life is.

And yet, when you step back and shut the door behind you, what other thoughts crowd in? If he comes for the milk tomorrow, we're talking about a post-dated cheque. What would have happened if Cole hadn't followed up? Lightbulbs and cat litter. Lightbulbs, cat litter, and find cheque-book. Surely the referee would have given Yorkie a penalty?

Being bumbled by the cosmos is like staring into the sun - not something you can spend too much time on. Instead, the mind veers away to



MIKE
ROWBOTTOM

other concerns. Which is where the real problems begin.

If I could concentrate my mental resources on useful projects, such as remembering where I put the car keys, remembering not to leave the newspapers by the front

door because the cat pisses on them, and, oh yes, remembering where I left my chequebook - if I could master even these small accomplishments, my life would be easier.

Even better if I could store useful information in my head. How many stopcocks are there in the house, and where are they? Which fuses correspond to which lights? What is my current tax coding? Where, exactly, is the garden fork? Did we lend it to anybody, and if so on what basis?

That advertisement with the challenging questions in thick black type which crops up on the front of newspapers - do you forget names, people, faces? - actually, I don't recall the details - well, it rings a bell. That accompanying picture of a baffled young man who looks like

someone stumped for an answer on a 1950s American quiz show. I identify with him.

A psychologist writes: This problem occurs because the subject does not wish to take on adult responsibilities and engage with adult patterns of behaviour.

The subject responds: Not true. I don't take any pleasure in being inefficient. It simply wastes my time and prevents me doing other things which are more enjoyable. And even those things are adversely affected.

I have often thought it would be nice to remember poetry - even accepting the obvious risks of becoming one of those people who remembers poetry. To be able to call upon an apt quote when the occasion requires would be... well... I would like, when the occasion

requires, to be able to call upon an apt quote.

I once spent several hours trying to commit to memory a poem by Louis MacNiece, *The Sunlight on the Garden*, because, basically, I liked it. A colleague of mine with a particularly well-stocked mind spent several... pints, actually... trying to coach me in my task.

And, for a while, it worked. I had consciously enriched my mental store. I had added something of real value. But the words slipped away like... well... they slipped away.

Yet some things do lodge in the space between my ears. They fall into two broad categories. The first is pop tunes and lyrics. Especially - and perversely - those I have heard my children singing over breakfast, or late at night when they should be asleep. These

songs are usually associated with a mental picture of a group of strutting youths with body piercing - or an unnaturally mature 15-year-old thrusting her pelvis at the television cameras.

The second, thank God, is sport. I may not be able to remember poetry, but I can recall certain sporting moments with the utmost clarity, and I can recall the emotion of them.

Frank Lampard Sr, who hardly ever scored, jiggling around a corner flag after scoring for West Ham in the 1980 FA Cup semi-final against Everton.

Peter Elliott actually winning the title his talent merited at the 1990 Commonwealth Games in Auckland, accelerating away from the Kenyans with a broadening grin. Arthur Ashe concentrating his

willpower at the side of Wimbledon's Centre Court before finishing off the new brat on the block, Jimmy Connors.

Life is full of mysteries. But these are the kind I find myself dwelling on. Why didn't every England footballer at the last World Cup practice penalties as a matter of course? Why did West Ham sign Iain Dowie? Even more puzzlingly, why did they buy him back after they'd sold him? (I've read Harry Redknapp's reasons, and I'm still not convinced.) Why does David Gilnola wear a vest? What does Dennis Wise do for an encore?

And all this week, there has been another one nagging away at me. What would have happened if Cole hadn't followed up? Would the referee have given Dwight Yorke a penalty?

Renaissance of Llanelli's treble-chasers

The Scarlets have put their financial difficulties behind them and are on course to bring trophies and crowds back to Stradey Park. By Chris Hewett

STRADEY PARK is a long way from Old Trafford, both literally and figuratively. Manchester United attract more supporters for a single game than Llanelli pull in over the course of a dozen, and David Beckham's weekly wage packet would keep the entire Scarlets squad fed and watered for the best part of a month. Still, parallels exist between the two: both wear red, both usually play their home matches in a constant downpour and both have cornered the market in sporting romance. Oh yes, one other thing. Both are chasing a treble that would mean the world to them.

Admittedly, Alex Ferguson would think long and hard before swapping one of his garden gnomes for the Welsh Rugby Union Challenge Trophy, the Welsh Premiership and what is, for the time being, still referred to as the Swansea Cup (Swalec are pulling the plug in frustration at the political overkill on the far side of the Severn Bridge). But for those of us who have been reared on tales of Scarlets derring-do - of Carwyn and Delme, and Benny and Grav, and the legendary 1972 win over the All Blacks - Llanelli's sudden re-emergence as a power in the land is worthy of celebration.

This afternoon, Robbie McBryde's team visit Ebbw Vale in a Premiership play-off match of considerable significance: victory would establish Llanelli, who already have the Challenge Trophy on the Stradey clubhouse shelf, as the odds-on favourites for the title, with a cup final against the neighbouring hot-shots from Swansea still to come. They have lost only twice in 17 games and when Stuart Gallacher, their chief executive, talks about a "transformation" in fortunes, he is by no means overstating the case.

As recently as November 1996 Llanelli were on their knees and Welsh rugby - no, damn it, world rugby - was in serious danger of losing one of its treasures. With professionalism in its chaotic, good-money-after-bad runaway stage, the Scarlets spent cash they

did not have on players they could not afford, not least Frano Botica, the former All Black stand-off. That naive cost them their famous old ground, sold to the Union for £1.2m, and very nearly cost them a whole lot more. The Scarlets were within days of bolting the Stradey gates and calling in the pin-striped receivers.

Largely as a result of the WRU's sympathetic intervention and the success of a share issue that raised £560,000 from scratch, the club stayed afloat. But the after-shock was almost as damaging as the financial earthquake: in the autumn of 1997, the All Blacks returned to a packed Stradey for a sentimental silver anniversary re-match and scored 13 tries in an 81-3 landslide. The ground has not been full since, when Llanelli took on and beat the

'Part of the problem is we have turned people off. The absence of Cardiff and Swansea has made life very difficult.'

brilliant Parisians of Stade Français in this season's European Cup, only 2,000 or so watched them do it.

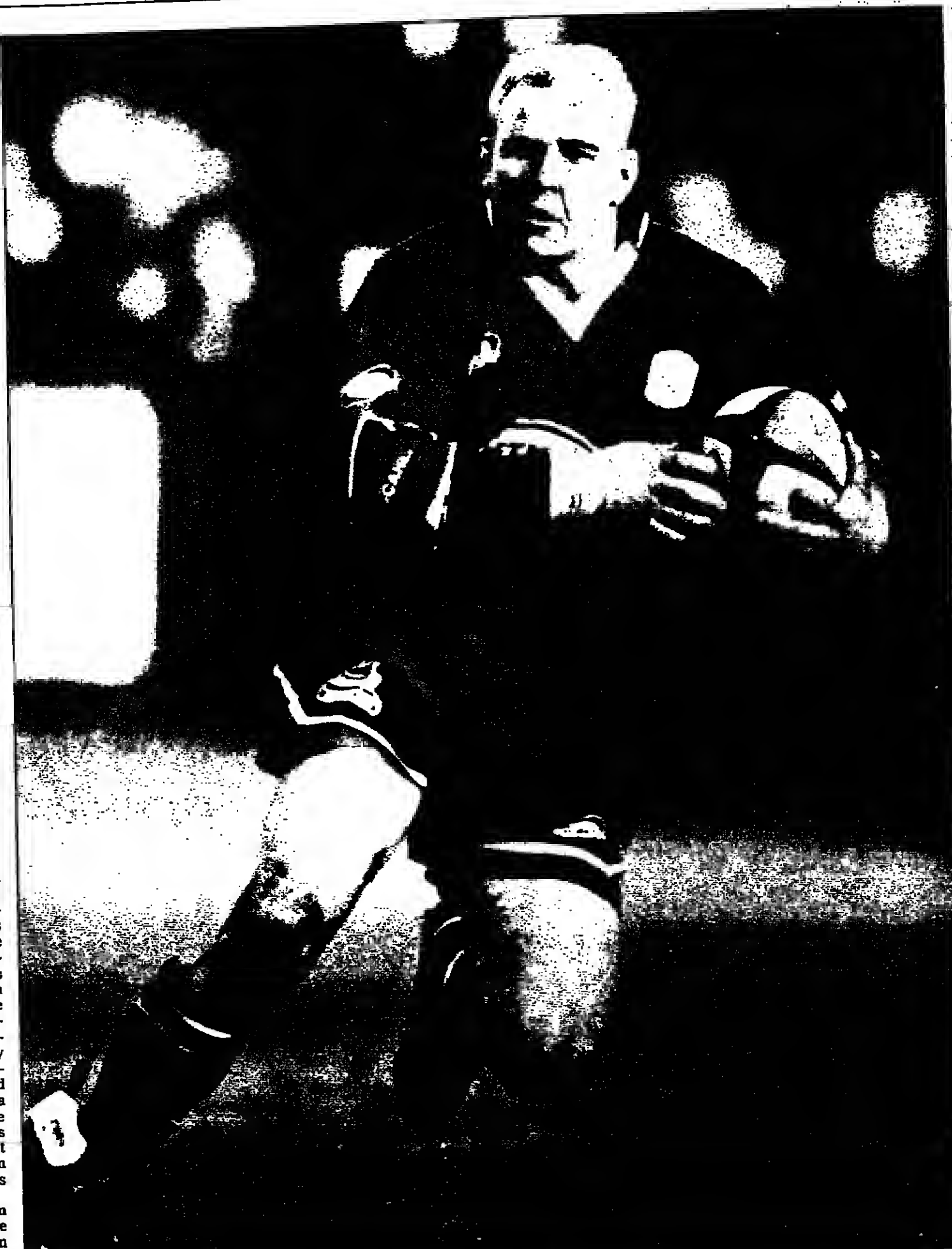
"We've had a good few months, no doubt about it, but our gates are still a big negative," admitted Gallacher this week. "We're averaging around 4,000 at the moment, but we need 6,000-plus if we're going to build the business in the right way. Where have the crowds gone? I can't tell you. We still have support in the locality - if you need proof that Llanelli is a rugby town, look at our share issue, where we raised more than half-a-million [pounds], not through a single sugar daddy but through more than 1,000 rank and file Scarlets. But we're not getting them in on a Saturday afternoon, despite our best efforts in selling ourselves to the community."

"I think part of the problem can

be found in the way Welsh rugby as a whole has conducted itself in recent years. Let's be honest, we've turned people off. The absence of Cardiff and Swansea from domestic [league] competition has made life very difficult and the collapse of the British League negotiations hasn't helped. In addition, our recent success has led to a number of our games being broadcast live on television at 5.30 on a Saturday night. To build an audience, you need stability. People want to know that there will be a big game at Stradey once a fortnight, kick-off 2.30. There is no point talking about revenue streams and all the rest of it when you have a higgledy-piggledy structure like ours."

For all that, Gallacher has stabilised Llanelli's off-field position in his 18 months as chief executive, just as Gareth Jenkins, the outstanding club coach in Wales, has stabilised performances on the paddock. Last weekend's cup semi-final demolition of the Cardiff rebels - a victory almost dripping in *schadenfreude* - underlined the effectiveness of a recruitment campaign that has brought Scott Quinnell, the Lions No 8, back to Stradey along with two fellow Welsh internationals, Byron Hayward and John Davies, and Salehi Finau, a ruthlessly physical wing from the South Sea Islands. Quinnell has more than punched his weight since re-crossing the Severn from Richmond; indeed, the Scarlets have barely lost since his return.

Now that Llanelli have been awarded "super club" status by the WRU - the union will pump in £250,000 a year for the next two years in return for a seat on the Stradey board and an input in player development - they intend to strengthen further in an effort to leave their scarlet mark on next season's European Cup. Indeed, tangible success in the richest club tournament in the world would give them an opportunity to repurchase their spiritual home from their landlords. Llanelli have an option to buy back



Scott Quinnell, the Lions No 8, has more than punched his weight since recrossing the Severn from Richmond

Allsport

at the original selling price under the terms of a deal that shows the governing body, lambasted and ridiculed for Milford Haven to Newport docks for their mismanagement of the game in Wales, in an unusually positive light.

"Europe is where we need to perform," agreed Gallacher. "To do

so, we will need a more powerful, more flexible squad and, yes, that means going into the market. But it also means banging on to what we have. Chris Wyatt, our second row, is the hottest property in Wales at the moment and understandably so, given the way he played in the Five Nations. We're

trying everything we know to keep him at Stradey.

"One of the key factors in our turning things around has been the understanding of the players, many of whom went through difficult times when the club was really up against it. They realised that we couldn't carry on offering fixed contracts that

were way out of our range and they continue to realise that we are operating under tight financial constraints. But they've stood by us and made things happen on the pitch. We're all a little bit wiser as a result of what happened. Hopefully, we're now in a position to build something that will last."

Weakened Sale ready to rebuff the champions elect

BY CHRIS HEWETT

IT WOULD not be entirely accurate to describe Sale's relationship with Leicester in All-Frazier terms; after all, the Manchester club are no one's idea of a true heavyweight. Still, the two sides have spent much of the last three years punching seven bells out of each other and mutual respect is fairly thin on the ground. Sale love to cast Leicester in the "big ugly bear" mould, while the Midlands have long held the view that their rivals are too lippy for their own good.

Hence the heightened interest in this afternoon's 15-rounder at Heywood Road, where the Tigers have a chance of wrapping up the Allied Dunbar Premiership title three

weeks early. "Relationships haven't been brilliant between ourselves and Leicester," admitted Sale's director of rugby, Adrian Hadley, yesterday. "The 1997 league match up here was an acrimonious affair - there was trouble on the pitch and the referee had a rough time off it after awarding them a late penalty try that took them into Europe at our expense. Things have moved on, though. It will be a decent game this time, hopefully."

So keen was Hadley to exercise some water-under-the-bridge diplomacy that he went on to praise Leicester as "worthy champions", ig-

norning the fact that a Northampton victory at Bedford today would allow Tim Rodber's side to contest the issue for another week at least. "You have to admire their strong squad and consistency of performance," he said. "Leicester away is the toughest game of the season and Leicester at home is the second toughest."

They tend to be particularly tough when your own side is in tatters. Sale have endured a horrible few weeks, bidding a fractious farewell to their coach, John Mitchell, and seeing a number of leading players, including their international wings David Rees and Steve Hanley, pick up season-threatening injuries. Their financial situation is so desperate

that they have placed their most recent England cap, Barrie-Jon Mather, on the transfer list. What price a Sale victory under those unpropitious circumstances?

"We aren't frightened of them," insisted Hadley, "even though our own season has been pretty disappointing: brilliant one week, rubbish the next." Brave words indeed but, just to make matters worse for the underdogs, their experienced scrum-half, Kevin Ellis, is a doubtful starter. Leicester, on the other hand, give their own first-choice half-back, Austin Healey, a first Premiership start since February.

Down in mid-table, where a fluster of European contenders are locked

in mortal combat, eighth-placed Newcastle will fancy their chances of closing in on a top-six position by beating the travel-sick whipping boys of Gloucester at Kingston Park. Va'aiga Tuigamala and Peter Walton are likely absentees from the Falcons' line-up, while Gloucester go in without their injured Samoan centre, Terry Fanolua, who is replaced by the Premiership debutant Mike Davies. Their midfield problems may be eased next week, however. Cliff Mytton, a 30-year-old Auckland whose performances for Stade Français have earned him all sorts of accolades on the far side of the Channel, is being linked with a move to Kingsholm.

By coincidence, Mytton's former colleagues back home in New Zealand have forged an English link of their own. The Auckland Blues, the most successful Super 12 outfit in the history of the southern hemisphere competition, intend to foster a close working relationship with Worcester: the ambitious Premiership Two club coached by Les Cusworth. In addition, the All Blacks intend to use Worcester's state-of-the-art training facilities during this autumn's World Cup.

Meanwhile, the International Rugby Board admitted five new national unions - Cameroon, Colombia, India, Peru and the Pacific island of Niue - to the rugby fraternity during their annual meeting in Buenos Aires.

More significantly, they sounded the death knell for old-style rugby elitism by guaranteeing a number of less-fashionable unions regular Test activity against the traditional powers of the 15-man game. Argentina, Canada, Fiji, Italy, Japan, Romania, Tonga, the United States and Western Samoa will all benefit from a new fixture schedule drawn up by Bernard Lapasset, the French chairman of the IRB tours committee.

In addition, board members agreed to ban pain-killing injections both directly before and during matches. Vernon Pugh, the IRB chairman, will head a new anti-doping committee, to be put in place before the World Cup kicks off.

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Mahler revival to stun Bobbyjo

SO THIS, suddenly, is it. No more first-fence fallers, no more cursing as your jockey goes out the side exit, and no more wondering what might have been but for that bad blunder two out. Or not for another six months, at any rate, because the Whitbread Gold Cup effectively marks the end of the 1998-99 National Hunt season. All that diehard followers of the winter code can do between now and October is book early for the Cheltenham Festival, and perhaps plan a trip to Galway or Punchestown.

But the jumpers do at least have a fine race with which to take their leave. It is just two weeks since Bobbyjo bounded cheerfully around Aintree to become the first Irish-trained National winner in a generation, but he is back in Britain for the Whitbread, and sure to start favourite this afternoon. The 18 horses lined up against him include Baronet, last year's Scottish National winner, Boss Doyle, who was one of Ireland's best novices last year and Betty's Boy, who won a valuable chase at the Festival.

RICHARD EDMONDSON
Nap: Bobbyjo
(Sandown 3.30)
NB: Silver Robin
(Leicester 5.05)

One absentee, though, will be Paul Carberry, who rode Bobbyjo at Aintree. A recent injury while riding work for Noel Meade has ruled Carberry out, and his place will be taken by Adrian Maguire, who rode last year's Whitbread winner, Call It A Day. "I sat on Bobbyjo this morning," Maguire said yesterday, "and he feels fine."

While he might feel fine at exercise there must be some doubt about whether Bobbyjo will run up to his best so soon after the National. It is true that he might not need to, since he ran off an 11lb higher mark at Liverpool, and also worth noting that he ran twice within a fortnight last season, and did rather better in the second race than the first. Nothing exhausts a horse quite like the National, however, and this race, Bobbyjo's seventh of the season, could be one too many. In the circumstances, the quote of 3-1 is easily resisted.

And there are doubts too about several of his opponents. Baronet's jumping is often very shaky, Betty's Boy would like

BY GREG WOOD

faster ground, and Boss Doyle has yet to recapture last year's form, which could leave the yearling clear for an outsider. The one who catches the eye is MAHLER (nap 3.30).

Mahler would probably prefer a softer surface, but otherwise he is a very solid 12-1 chance, now that a back problem which troubled him earlier this year seems to have been cured. On the pick of his form last year - his win in the £100,000 Heineken Gold Cup at Punchestown - he is very well handicapped, and his staying on sixth over an inadequate trip at Aintree last time hinted at a return to his best.

There are just five runners in the preceding novice chase, yet it is much harder to find a worthwhile bet. Andisephi (2.50) may be a little more reliable than Dines, who lost last time out despite almost refusing to start and losing 20 lengths in the process, but it is the Flat events which offer more of interest.

Many punters will not look beyond Glamis in the Threshers Classic Trial, given that John Gosden wins the race with monotonous regularity, and this Derby prospect has already won well this season. A value alternative, though, could be Debutant (next best 4.10), who won the Easter Stakes at Kempton despite finding trouble in running. The Brigadier Gerard Stakes, meanwhile, could fall to Secret Saver (4.45), who would prefer an extra couple of furlongs but might just find this stiff 10 furlongs an adequate test.

One contest which you will not be able to bet on is the Tote Challenge at 1.15, a match which pits Tony McCoy, the champion over jumps, against Frankie Dettori, the "people's champion" on the Flat (Keireen Fallon, presumably, was not interested).

They will ride O'Garney Park and Omar's Odyssey, both of them very ordinary horses from Philip Mitchell's yard and chosen for their equal lack of ability. The winner can hardly claim to be the best rider in Britain, but he will at least receive £3,000, to be donated to the charity of his choice.

Robert Thornton is to part company with David Nicholson. Last year's champion conditional has turned freelance after four years with the Jackdaws Castle trainee.

Orpen leads O'Brien team

ORPEN BECAME Aidan O'Brien's leading candidate for the 2,000 Guineas with a pleasing piece of work yesterday and was cut to 6-1 (from 8-1) by William Hill for next Saturday's Classic. O'Brien, winner of the 2,000 a year ago with King Of Kings, may also run Stravinsky and Lavery depending on the state of the ground and confirmed that Sunspangled will carry his hopes in the 1,000 Guineas the following day.

"We'll leave it until later in the week to decide about Stravinsky and Lavery. But both must have good or faster ground," O'Brien said. Stravinsky has been withdrawn from the Tetrarch Stakes at the Curragh tomorrow and should miss Newmarket he may take in the French 2,000. Michael Kiane will be on Orpen and Sunspangled in the Classics.

At Sandown yesterday the shortcomings of another Guineas aspirant were exposed as Ballet Master finished fourth in the opening race to Little Rock. Ballet Master began the day as a 12-1 shot for the Guineas but has now been withdrawn from betting on the Classic.

The chestnut travelled easily until a furlong out where Kieren Fallon, his rider, began to show signs of anxiety. His mount found little response, leaving Little Rock, trained by Michael Stoute, to beat Grand Sonnet by two and a half

lengths. The winner received a quote of 25-1 for the Derby. Cecil refused to write off Ballet Master, the 4-9 favourite. "He was cantering one and a half furlongs out and just got tired," he said.

The favourite for the 1,000, Moiva, will not be ridden by Richard Quinn. The filly's trainer, Criquelette Head, was forced to look elsewhere for a rider for Moiva after her stable jockey, Olivier Doleuze, incurred a riding ban. "Instead of a top-class French rider we will have a top-class British rider," Head said. "Way of Light attempts to boost his French 2,000 Guineas claims in the Group Three Prix de Fontainebleau over a mile at Longchamp tomorrow. Last season's French champion juvenile is opposed by the André Fabre-trained trio, Grazeale, Pinkal and Indian Danehill, plus Iridanos, Prince Powhatan and Le Roi Chic. Montjeu, entered for the Derby at the second entry stage, runs in the Group Two Prix Greffulhe.

Peter Chapple-Hyam's World Alert, second to Bahamian Bandit at the Craven Meeting, tackles the Italian 2,000 Guineas in Rome tomorrow. Jimmy Fortune's mount may have most to fear from Frankie Dettori's ride, Strawberry Fields. Hipon's card today hinges on a 7.30am inspection.

Yesterday's results & Ripon and Wolverhampton cards, p24



Little Rock and Frankie Dettori leave the Kieren Fallon-ridden Ballet Master flat footed in the opening race at Sandown yesterday

Julian Herbert/HallSport

MARKET RASEN

HYPERION
2.10 Flora Dreambird 2.40 Dragons Bay
3.10 Fair And Fancy 3.45 Keen To The Last 4.20
Patras 4.55 Brambleberry 5.30 Waterberg 6.00
Saramat

GOING: Soft (Good to Soft in back straight).
Right-hand, sharp, undulating circuit. Run-in of one furlong.
Course is of town on A631. Market Rasen station (London to Grimsby line) on A631. Club 514; Tattersalls Club 10AP (Grimsby line) on A631. Club 514; Tattersalls Club 10AP (Grimsby line) on A631. Club 514; Tattersalls Club 10AP (Grimsby line) on A631.

FAVOURITES: 2.10 Flora Dreambird (1) P. H. 10-1. 3.10 Fair And Fancy (1) P. H. 10-1. 4.20 Patras (1) P. H. 10-1. 5.30 Waterberg (1) P. H. 10-1. 6.00 Saramat (1) P. H. 10-1.

HEALTH SCHEME SELLING H'CAP HURDLE (G) £2,000 added 2m 1f 110yds
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FORM VERD

THE SWEEPER

BY CLIVE WHITE AND NICK HARRIS

New deal? News to me, says Coppell

ALL WAS not as it seemed on Monday, when the Crystal Palace chairman, Mark Goldberg, addressed a gathering of fans and reassured them over the future of the financially troubled club. Goldberg said his manager, Steve Coppell, had signed a new five-year deal. This was about the only thing he said all night that was applauded by the majority of the audience, who had had to pay £5 for the privilege of hearing the extent of their club's troubles. But wait. Yesterday's *Croydon Advertiser* ran a headline saying "Coppell: I have not signed a fresh deal." In the article Coppell was quoted as saying that he has had his current contract since Terry Venables left in January and there was nothing new about it. "I don't have a new five-year contract," he said. On the task of trying to pick a team each week, when the future is in the balance, he added: "It's pointless really. I have no control whatsoever over who comes in or who goes from the football club."

Fans have also been wondering how many of Monday's audience were either bodyguards for Goldberg - it was later revealed that his administrators had insisted on a team of walkie-talkied minders being placed strategically around the hall - and how many were pro-Goldberg stooges. At one point, a "fan" asked: "Are Mark's problems only the same as [previous owner] Ron Noades's? Is Mark not just being more honest?" The truth-seeker was recognised, however, as a Palace official who had the temerity to throw The Sweeper's representative out of the club's training ground recently. Having made his point from the back of the hall, the questioner retired to a box occupied by other Goldberg supporters.

AFTER LAST Saturday's experience when Gordon Strachan paid the price for not having suitable cover for goalkeeper Magnus Hedman when the Swede injured himself early on, it is a fair bet that the Coventry manager will give veteran Steve Ogriovic the 12-month contract extension he seeks. Contrary to reports, however, Oggy would still be

lagging behind John Burridge as the oldest Premiership player on record - unless, of course, Strachan were to give him a two-year contract. Burridge set the record when an injury to Tony Cotton gave him the chance to turn out for Manchester City against Queen's Park Rangers in their last game of the 1994-95 Premiership season at the age of 43 years, five months and 11 days. Ogriovic will only be 42 in September, but he has been a great servant for the club, overtaking George Curtis's record number of League appearances last season and now standing at 504.

He would almost certainly have made his 505th appearance last Saturday had he not been injured. When Hedman suffered a hip injury Strachan was reluctant to pit 17-year-old Chris Kirkland into the fray

He is a great lad, a manager's dream, but he will have to get used to the different ways of operating over there. He likes his freedom and spare time and over in Spain they train three times a day sometimes. It will be interesting to see how he copes with things like that. Well, he surely didn't think he would not have to work for his £14m, did he?

LEE MILLS, the prolific Bradford City striker who took a fearful slugging off recently in the Port Vale programme on his return to the club, is the not the first Vale Park old boy it would appear to suffer from the author's poison pen. In an earlier Vale programme it was said of Dutchman Rogier Koordes after he had been released by the club: "He often looked as if he'd struggle to find a place in a Sunday League team full of middle-aged beer helies whose pre-match warm-ups is a bag and a pint of Peddy."

Of the departed Swede Jan Jansson it was said: "He seemed to have a fair-weather playing policy and his regular injuries were more often than not baffling to medical science. He was a bit like a Jaguar XJS, a fast designer car with great control but expensive to keep running and frequently unreliable." Just what the two foreigners had done to invite such bile is not known. At least Mills had given cause for resentment with his parting shot: "Three years at Vale Park is enough for anybody." At recent home games the local fanzine, *Vale Park Beano*, has invited fans to sign a letter supporting the club's views on Lee Mills. "I think a lot of fans would agree with the article in the match programme," editor Dick Mills (definitely no relation) said.

IT'S NICE to be remembered. At Stoke's last home game, the winner of the half-time draw received his prize from Eric Skeels, who still holds the record for League appearances at the Potteries club - 506 from 1958-76. The public address announcer introduced the legendary Stoke figure by saying, "And here to make the award is... Eric Sykes." What a Carry On.

AS YOU WERE



AS MANCHESTER UNITED stay on course for their "historic treble" it's worth remembering that another British side has already gone one better with a memorable four-timer 32 years ago. In 1967, Celtic won the Scottish League title, the Scottish FA Cup and the Scottish League Cup, and then crowned their year with a European Cup victory over Internazionale. They effectively secured their place in the European final with a 3-1 win over Dukla Prague in the semi-final first leg. The second leg's 0-0 scoreline did little to dampen the spirit as the players, including Bobby Lennox, Bertie Auld and Bobby Murdoch celebrated (above). Jimmy Johnstone (second from right), scored twice in the first leg.

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

WHAT A dilemma. It's going to be hard to know who to root for in the UEFA Cup Final in Moscow next month. Should *The Price Is Right* cheer on Parma (the 1-2 favourites we've backed at "Burlington Bertie" 100-30) or Marseille (the 6-4 underdogs we've backed at 7-1)? Easy money. Things are admittedly somewhat more clear-cut in the European Cup final. Man-

chester United (the 4-6 favourites we've backed at 9-2) have simply got to beat Bayern Munich at the Nou Camp while, in the Cup-Winners' Cup final at Villa Park, Lazio (the 1-2 favourites we've backed at 6-4) must beat Real Mallorca. Meanwhile, despite last week's reverse, we reckon we're pulling into Draw Central again this week-end so we're going for a big bet: spread with a fun four-timer thrown in to boot.

SWEEPER'S PUSH FOR PROMOTION

LIBERO WAGER
(35 x £1 trebles with Stanley): Blackburn to draw with Liverpool (12-5); Everton to draw with Charlton (9-4); Leicester to draw with Coventry (9-4); Tottenham to draw with West Ham (12-5); Wimbledon to draw with Newcastle (9-4); Leeds to draw with Manchester United (9-4); Sheffield Wednesday to draw with Chelsea (12-5).

FUN FOUR-TIMER
(£1 four-timer with Stanley): Aston Villa to beat Nottingham Forest (4-11); Southampton to win at Derby (13-5); Arsenal to win at Middlesbrough (5-6); Sampdoria to draw with Lazio (2-1).
ORIGINAL BANK: £100.
CURRENT KITTY: £150.07!
TODAY'S BETS: £39.24 (inc. tax).

MASCOT ON THE MAT

Name: Paisley Panda.

Club: St Mirren.

Appearance: A 6ft panda. Crime sheet: Paisley Panda's troubles stem almost entirely from his behaviour at derby games against the Saints' deadliest rivals, Greenock Morton. Inside the Panda lurks an amiable chap called Andy "best not to use my surname" and in the first derby this season, he taunted the Morton fans with a scurrying brush and soap and a jaunty chant along the lines of "what a bunch of soap dodgers." Harmless enough you'd think, even when he went as far as chasing a Morton player shouting, "You need a wash." As Andy said this week: "It's not meant to offend anyone." In the most recent match between the sides, he continued his theme, bringing onto the pitch a giant "magic tree" air freshener, with which he taunted the opposition fans. They were not best pleased, and Andy confirmed this week that he will now officially be investigated by the Scottish FA following a police caution. Eat your heart out, Cyril the Swan. In mitigation, your Honour: Paisley Panda is a Love Street favourite, nimble on his feet, not bad at balletic poses and generally regarded as a cheeky but loveable rogue. Not that it washes with Morton fans.



MY TEAM



TIM LOVEJOY
CHELSEA

Sky sports "Soccer AM" presenter "My dad used to sit and watch Chelsea on television and I just thought it was a really thing to do. It was around 1970 and Chelsea were big at the time. I grew up in Middlesbrough and all my friends were Chelsea fans too. Because of lack of recent success my best memory is the 1997 FA Cup final. It was great that Di Matteo scored so early on, it meant it was a relaxing experience unlike most FA Cup finals. Although most of my heroes are the current side, who are a great bunch of lads, I still remember Joey Jones, Butch Wilkins and Mickey Thomas. I honestly believe we can win the League this year but if we don't, then a Champions' League place is a must."

Interview by Paul Atfield

IN T'NET

Found on the Web: FC Bayern München THE WEB home of Manchester United's European Cup final opponents has a section called "Foundation", which reads, rather tantalisingly: "Is that what Franz John imagined when he founded FC Bayern 97 years ago on 27 February 1900 in the Restaurant Gisela, together with eleven friends - that he was creating what was to be Germany's most successful football club? And just because in the 1879 Munich MTV club the main emphasis was on gymnastics, rather than on the then despised 'kicking around.' Head to this site for extensive news and features, including 'Neudecker era' and 'From Heynckes to Ritzfeld.' There's also information on the Olympic Stadium in Munich and the players, as well as a fairly comprehensive statistics package. http://www.sport1.de/fc/bayern/english/index_english.html

SEEN BUT NOT BOUGHT

AS REAL MALLORCA fans might say to the Chelsea team: "On yer bikes, lads." And what a choice they have. The Chelsea FC cycles are priced between £169.99 and £249.99 for the mountain models and the smaller BMX versions (are you watching, Dennis Wise?) are a snip, at between £90.00 and £150.00.

THEY'RE NOT ALL DENNIS BERGKAMP

Unsung foreign legionnaires No 36 RODNEY JACK. The 27-year-old St Vincent international striker joined Turkey on a free from Lambada, St Vincent in October 1995. He proved to be one of the most exciting players in the Third Division in 1996-97, scoring 10 goals in 33 League appearances. He added 12 more in 40 appearances the following season. Newcastle and Sunderland spotted his talent and went as far as inviting him to train with them. Neither could offer him a job. Rodney signed for Crewe in July last year, but was unavailable for this season's opening games as his work permit was delayed. "I see it as a step in the right direction," the player said when joining Crewe, whose only direction now appears to be down. "I just want to go there and perform." He scored both goals in a 2-0 Worthington Cup win over Oldham, and although he's since netted several more times, he's drifted in and out of contention.



Welsh 'Martyrs' surviving against the odds

I HAVE noticed over the last 20 years or so that our supporters have a tendency not to sing or chant, except for a few enthusiastic young teenagers who find it difficult to achieve much volume.

This may sound surprising, given that we are a Welsh club, but generally the singing gets left to the rugby supporters. Our poor performance in this area serves to increase my irritation with vociferous groups of travelling away fans who come and stand near my usual spot on the half-way line, singing and chanting what at the time sound like taunting and insulting attacks, but which, when I return to the cold light of day, I realise is harmless nonsense. However, during the game my irritation grows gradually until, by half-time, I

have developed a healthy hatred for the enemy choir.

Martyrs by name. Martyrs by nature. That is the recent lot of fans of Merthyr Tydfil AFC of the Dr Martens (Southern) League Premier Division. The club's nickname, the Martyrs, is based on the fact that the town is named after Tydfil, a fifth century Christian martyr. But in recent years the club supporters have been martyrs themselves, due to a series of events which have constantly threatened the club's existence.

Merthyr Tydfil is unusual in that it has, for the last 80 years, been a football oasis in south Wales, where rugby union is traditionally king, and is still the premier spectator sport. After the Second World War the defunct Merthyr Town were re-

FAN'S EYE VIEW

MERTHYR TYDFIL

BY JOHN STRAND

formed as Merthyr Tydfil AFC. In the following eight years the club won the Southern League five times, a record unsurpassed since the war. Eventually the good times came to an end, with the club alternating between the divisions of the Southern League for the following 30 years, although the club attracted many fine players towards the end of their careers, such as John Charles, Tommy Hutchison, George Wood and Bob Latchford.

Success returned in the 1980s. The Southern League title was captured once again, along with the Welsh Cup. There followed a memorable, narrowly lost, European Cup-Winners-Cup tie with the Italian side Atalanta. Several years were spent in what is now the Nationwide Conference, where a consistently enjoyable high standard of football was the norm. During this period there was a determined but unsuccessful attempt to force Merthyr to play in the League of Wales, which still collectively pulls in less fans than any one of the top clubs in the Conference.

In recent years things have dramatically declined. We have changed owners more than most clubs change managers. We have had four owners in

less than four years, with three managers this season alone. This has been accompanied by relegation back to the Southern League.

At last, however, the club is in the "money." A new consortium has rescued the club. It has the backing of a wealthy businessman, who originates from South Wales, and the new Chairman is Lyn Mittell, a Merthyr Tydfil show-business personality whose stage name is Owen Money.

There is a feeling among Merthyr fans that the new owners will have the appropriate commitment. The early signs are good. The first game after the announcement of the takeover was against the runaway league leaders, Nuneaton Borough. They brought a large band of supporters to

Penydarren Park a few weeks ago, outnumbering us. A large group than usual stood nearby and started the usual arrogant and taunting chants. All we could manage was a half-hearted "Come On Merthyr."

However, the unexpected happened and we led 1-0 at half time. Another goal followed, with the Martyrs dominating the second half. As always, the most enjoyable effect for me was the singing of the Nuneaton choir. We even managed to extend the chant of "Come On Merthyr" to 80 per cent of our supporters, to drown out any remnants of the Nuneaton singing. After recent events this enjoyable result was a reminder that, if you are patient in football the good times will come around again - assuming you still have a club.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

There's still more to come from this team. They have yet to reach their peak. Alex Ferguson, Man Utd manager, after his side's victory over Juventus.

As arrogant as Ferguson is, his team are splendid and divine in equal measure. 'Tuttosport', Italian paper, after United's victory.

Zidane doesn't like Turin? He misses the sea? He'd prefer Barcelona or Marseille? He can go where he likes, so long as he goes. He doesn't deserve to stay. 'Tuttosport', on the Juventus midfielder.

I have even taken drugs in

the dressing-room 20 minutes before a match. I started the match on speed and ended it on crutches. Martin Neil, of Berwick, on his drug problem.

I will be a bitter man if I don't win this year. Jimmy White, before his first-round defeat at the World Snooker Championships to Alan McManus.

This is not Armageddon. It happened. If all kids grew up to be like Scottie, the world would be a better place. Charles Barkley, of the NBA's Houston Astros, on the outcry after team-mate Pippen was arrested for drunk driving.

'I will play on' insists Vialli

Chelsea's leader is swift to counter speculation over his dual role after defeat in Europe. By Steve Tongue

GIANLUCA VIALLI was yesterday putting a brave face on defeat in the European Cup-Winners' Cup semi-final by Real Mallorca and trying to end confusion about his own role by insisting that he would continue playing as well as managing the team.

There was widespread surprise when Vialli's name did not even appear on the list of seven Chelsea substitutes before a 1-0 defeat in Palma on Thursday night put them out of the competition on a 2-1 aggregate. He had previously kept his head above water by playing in 11 games, but drawing a blank in each of his seven Premier League matches.

There was not an orthodox striker on the bench as Chelsea tried to retrieve the goal headed in by Leo Biagini after 15 minutes, following slack marking at a set-piece.

Vialli's comments immediately after the game - "I was not fully match fit. Sometimes it's



Gianfranco Zola cuts a lone, dejected figure in the aftermath of Chelsea's elimination by Real Mallorca in the Cup-Winners' Cup

minutes Argentina's goalkeeper Carlos Roa touched Roberto Di Matteo's powerful drive on to the bar and Dennis Wise failed to put the bite on Mallorca with a soft header.

The damage, however, had been done at Stamford Bridge, where for the third time in four

mean defence and swift counter-attacks were allowed a draw and an away goal from the only chance they created in 90 minutes.

Now Vialli must pick up his "chaps" with immediate effect, starting in the Premiership at Sheffield Wednesday tomorrow, just the sort of game to sort out which of them have the heart for five more battles this season. A big haul of points could yet earn the runners-up position, which would not only be Chelsea's best finish apart from the championship year of 1955, but would avoid the

Cotterill savours a champion party

Cheltenham look to future after winning League place. By Phil Shaw

AS THE morning after the night before broke over the Cotswolds, bleary-eyed and sore-throated Cheltenhamians pored over their newspapers to make sure it had not all been a delirious, drunken dream. After 107 years of habitual under-achievement, Cheltenham Town really had won promotion to the Football League.

None of the 6,150 people who packed Whaddon Road to its capacity on Thursday will quickly forget the identity of the player whose header deep in stoppage time defeated Yeovil Town and clinched the Nationwide Conference championship for Cheltenham. With his surname, Jamie Victory was probably destined to score the winner. It said much about the mayhem of the final moments and the party which followed that his fellow wing-back, Michael Duff, was adamant he had applied the decisive touch.

Confirming that Victory had officially been credited with the goal, the Cheltenham manager, Steve Cotterill, put the friendly dispute into perspective. "Who cares who scored it?" the former Wimbledon striker said yesterday. "All that matters is that we did it."

The 34-year-old Cotterill, who is Cheltenham-born and bred but based in Bourne-mo, finally left the celebrations at the club at six o'clock in the morning. He fell into bed at his parents' home at 6.30, only to be awoken at 8.0 by his excited daughters.

Cheltenham, who visit Hayes today, will have played six matches in 15 days before taking their leave of the Conference at home to Welling next Saturday. Only then will Cotterill start planning for next season, but he intimated that his squad, which includes a window-fitter, fitness instructor, mobile-phone salesman and two house-husbands (Victory and the captain, Chris Banks), will go full-time.

Cheltenham were in the Southern League, which provided their only previous title in 1984, when Cotterill arrived from Sligo Rovers 27 months ago. Promoted only because the champions, Grestley Rovers, could not satisfy the Conference's stadium requirements, they promptly finished runners-up to Halifax Town and won the FA Uthmo Trophy last season.

Cotterill, who was not joking when he said he expected "the freedom of the city", is confident Cheltenham can hold their own at the higher level. Average crowds of 3,000 demonstrate their potential, though they may have to fend off interest in their ambitious manager, who came close last autumn to landing the job at Swindon Town, 40 miles away and now their closest League rivals.

Redknapp denies part in Storrie exit

HARRY REDKNAPP has insisted he is not responsible for the West Ham board's decision to terminate the contract of their director of football, Peter Storrie.

Storrie will leave Upton Park at the end of this season and be replaced by the Sheffield Wednesday secretary, Graham Mackrell, who will assume the role of company secretary.

There have been suggestions that Storrie's exit is the result of differences between himself and Redknapp. The pair had a public row after the Hammers won at Derby earlier this season because Andy Impey was being sold to balance the books against the manager's wishes.

However, Redknapp said

him go. He played a major role in establishing our youth academy and he has backed me and my staff all the way."

Hammers striker Paolo Di Canio has been fined £500 after a row with an Italian traffic policeman. The case dated back to June 1997 when Di Canio was visiting Terri, his wife's home town, and tried to drive into an area restricted to permit-holders.

Today, the Hammers travel across London to White Hart Lane where talks between Tottenham Hotspur and Sol Campbell about a new contract have hit a snag, according to the club captain. However, he stressed that he is keen to stay with Spurs, where he started his career.

The 24-year-old England defender, coveted by some of Europe's leading clubs, began negotiations recently about extending his contract, which has two years to run.

However, it is thought Campbell is waiting to see whether the club's ambitions match his own before signing a new deal, and he is keen to see Tottenham build on their success after winning the League Cup this season. "There are a few problems on the table which we've got to sort out," he said.

"It's all about the right package and everything to do with

Lazio 'tranquil' as Milan close

IF LAZIO were looking for a morale booster after the two worst weeks of their otherwise triumphant season, their Cup-Winners' Cup semi-final on Thursday failed to provide it.

True, the Romans qualified for a European final for the second consecutive year, but the way they did it - on the away goals rule after a soporific 0-0 draw in the second leg at the Olympic Stadium - can have done little to convince their coach, Sven Goran Eriksson, that his side are truly in line for trophies this year.

Lazio appeared to have the championship secured a fortnight ago before two consecutive defeats and two straight victories for Milan threw the race wide open again. The Rome club had to cope with numerous absences in defence last weekend as they slumped to a 3-1 loss to Juventus, and should recover all but the suspended Alessandro Nesta.

However, it is the level of team morale which most worries Eriksson before tomorrow's live Channel 4 game against Sampdoria in Genoa. The biggest threat to his team is the creeping self-doubt after

Japan meet Spain in a surprise package

A NEW name will be inscribed on the World Youth Cup today when Japan and Spain, who have surprised even themselves by getting so far, meet in the final. Spain reached the final 12 years ago when they lost out to Brazil by a single goal, but Japan's appearance is the biggest turn-up the tournament has seen since Qatar reached the 1983 final before going down 4-0 to Germany.

two years ago but now they are more balanced, they are technically good," he said. "Before, they simply ran around a lot."

The Asians will miss their suspended captain, Shinji Ono, who collected a second yellow card for time-wasting in the 2-1 semi-final win over Uruguay.

Japan have knocked out Portugal, Mexico and Uruguay as well as claiming victories over the United States and Eng-

land in the first round. They have only three First Division professionals in their team and are missing five top players who were prevented from travelling by the Japanese federation because they did not get hepatitis B vaccinations in time.

Spain began the tournament with a well-deserved 2-0 win over the three-times champions, Brazil.

Nigeria's hopes of hosting

WEEKEND FIXTURE GUIDE AND POOLS FORECAST

TODAY		SCOTTISH LEAGUE		NORTH WESTERN TRAINS LEAGUE		WELSH NATIONAL LEAGUE		RUGBY LEAGUE	
FOOTBALL		FIRST DIVISION		PREMIER DIVISION		PREMIER DIVISION		3.0 unless stated	
FR CARLING PREMIERSHIP		SECOND DIVISION		SECOND DIVISION		SECOND DIVISION		JUB SPORTS	
1 Aston Villa v North Forest		1 Bolton v Walsley		1 Bolton v Walsley		1 Bolton v Walsley		1 Bolton v Walsley	
2 Blackburn v Liverpool		2 Bolton v Walsley		2 Bolton v Walsley		2 Bolton v Walsley		2 Bolton v Walsley	
3 Derby v Southampton		3 Bolton v Walsley		3 Bolton v Walsley		3 Bolton v Walsley		3 Bolton v Walsley	
4 Everton v Charlton		4 Bolton v Walsley		4 Bolton v Walsley		4 Bolton v Walsley		4 Bolton v Walsley	
5 Leicester v Coventry		5 Bolton v Walsley		5 Bolton v Walsley		5 Bolton v Walsley		5 Bolton v Walsley	
6 Middlesbrough v Arsenal		6 Bolton v Walsley		6 Bolton v Walsley		6 Bolton v Walsley		6 Bolton v Walsley	
7 Tottenham v West Ham		7 Bolton v Walsley		7 Bolton v Walsley		7 Bolton v Walsley		7 Bolton v Walsley	
8 Wimbledon v Newcastle		8 Bolton v Walsley		8 Bolton v Walsley		8 Bolton v Walsley		8 Bolton v Walsley	
NATIONWIDE LEAGUE		NATIONWIDE LEAGUE		NATIONWIDE LEAGUE		NATIONWIDE LEAGUE		NATIONWIDE LEAGUE	
9 Bristol City v Birmingham		9 Bolton v Walsley		9 Bolton v Walsley		9 Bolton v Walsley		9 Bolton v Walsley	
10 Huddersfield v Barnsley		10 Bolton v Walsley		10 Bolton v Walsley		10 Bolton v Walsley		10 Bolton v Walsley	
11 Ipswich v Crewe		11 Bolton v Walsley		11 Bolton v Walsley		11 Bolton v Walsley		11 Bolton v Walsley	
12 Oxford Utd v Norwich		12 Bolton v Walsley		12 Bolton v Walsley		12 Bolton v Walsley		12 Bolton v Walsley	
13 Portsmouth v Stockport		13 Bolton v Walsley		13 Bolton v Walsley		13 Bolton v Walsley		13 Bolton v Walsley	
14 QPR v Bradford City		14 Bolton v Walsley		14 Bolton v Walsley		14 Bolton v Walsley		14 Bolton v Walsley	
15 Sunderland v Sheffield Utd		15 Bolton v Walsley		15 Bolton v Walsley		15 Bolton v Walsley		15 Bolton v Walsley	
16 Swindon v Grimsby		16 Bolton v Walsley		16 Bolton v Walsley		16 Bolton v Walsley		16 Bolton v Walsley	
17 Tranmere v Port Vale		17 Bolton v Walsley		17 Bolton v Walsley		17 Bolton v Walsley		17 Bolton v Walsley	
18 Watford v Crystal Palace		18 Bolton v Walsley		18 Bolton v Walsley		18 Bolton v Walsley		18 Bolton v Walsley	
SECOND DIVISION		SECOND DIVISION		SECOND DIVISION		SECOND DIVISION		SECOND DIVISION	
19 Blackpool v Bristol Rovers		19 Bolton v Walsley		19 Bolton v Walsley		19 Bolton v Walsley		19 Bolton v Walsley	
20 Bournemouth v Chesterfield		20 Bolton v Walsley		20 Bolton v Walsley		20 Bolton v Walsley		20 Bolton v Walsley	
21 Fulham v Walsley		21 Bolton v Walsley		21 Bolton v Walsley		21 Bolton v Walsley		21 Bolton v Walsley	
22 Lincoln City v Walsley		22 Bolton v Walsley		22 Bolton v Walsley		22 Bolton v Walsley		22 Bolton v Walsley	
23 Macclesfield v York		23 Bolton v Walsley		23 Bolton v Walsley		23 Bolton v Walsley		23 Bolton v Walsley	
24 Mansfield v Walsley		24 Bolton v Walsley		24 Bolton v Walsley		24 Bolton v Walsley		24 Bolton v Walsley	
25 Millwall v Preston		25 Bolton v Walsley		25 Bolton v Walsley		25 Bolton v Walsley		25 Bolton v Walsley	
26 Northampton v Colchester		26 Bolton v Walsley		26 Bolton v Walsley		26 Bolton v Walsley		26 Bolton v Walsley	
27 Notts County v Walsley		27 Bolton v Walsley		27 Bolton v Walsley		27 Bolton v Walsley		27 Bolton v Walsley	
28 Oldham v Gillingham		28 Bolton v Walsley		28 Bolton v Walsley		28 Bolton v Walsley		28 Bolton v Walsley	
29 Stoke v Burnley		29 Bolton v Walsley		29 Bolton v Walsley		29 Bolton v Walsley		29 Bolton v Walsley	
30 Wigan v Reading		30 Bolton v Walsley		30 Bolton v Walsley		30 Bolton v Walsley		30 Bolton v Walsley	
THIRD DIVISION		THIRD DIVISION		THIRD DIVISION		THIRD DIVISION		THIRD DIVISION	
31 Brighton v Hull		31 Bolton v Walsley		31 Bolton v Walsley		31 Bolton v Walsley		31 Bolton v Walsley	
32 Cambridge Utd v Peterborough		32 Bolton v Walsley		32 Bolton v Walsley		32 Bolton v Walsley		32 Bolton v Walsley	
33 Leyton Orient v Shrewsbury		33 Bolton v Walsley		33 Bolton v Walsley		33 Bolton v Walsley		33 Bolton v Walsley	
34 Chester v Halifax		34 Bolton v Walsley		34 Bolton v Walsley		34 Bolton v Walsley		34 Bolton v Walsley	
35 Exeter v Rochdale		35 Bolton v Walsley		35 Bolton v Walsley		35 Bolton v Walsley		35 Bolton v Walsley	
36 Grimsby v Barnsley		36 Bolton v Walsley		36 Bolton v Walsley		36 Bolton v Walsley		36 Bolton v Walsley	
37 Scarbrough v Cardiff		37 Bolton v Walsley		37 Bolton v Walsley		37 Bolton v Walsley		37 Bolton v Walsley	
38 Scunthorpe v Barnet		38 Bolton v Walsley		38 Bolton v Walsley		38 Bolton v Walsley		38 Bolton v Walsley	
39 Southend v Brentford		39 Bolton v Walsley		39 Bolton v Walsley		39 Bolton v Walsley		39 Bolton v Walsley	
40 Swansea v Plymouth		40 Bolton v Walsley		40 Bolton v Walsley		40 Bolton v Walsley		40 Bolton v Walsley	
41 Torquay v Rochdale		41 Bolton v Walsley		41 Bolton v Walsley		41 Bolton v Walsley		41 Bolton v Walsley	
BANK OF SCOTLAND		BANK OF SCOTLAND		BANK OF SCOTLAND		BANK OF SCOTLAND		BANK OF SCOTLAND	
SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE		SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE		SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE		SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE		SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE	
42 Dundee v Kilmarnock		42 Bolton v Walsley		42 Bolton v Walsley		42 Bolton v Walsley		42 Bolton v Walsley	
43 Dunfermline v Dundee Utd		43 Bolton v Walsley		43 Bolton v Walsley		43 Bolton v Walsley		43 Bolton v Walsley	
44 Motherwell v Hearts		44 Bolton v Walsley		44 Bolton v Walsley		44 Bolton v Walsley		44 Bolton v Walsley	
45 Rangers v Aberdeen		45 Bolton v Walsley		45 Bolton v Walsley		45 Bolton v Walsley		45 Bolton v Walsley	
46 St Johnstone v Celtic		46 Bolton v Walsley		46 Bolton v Walsley		46 Bolton v Walsley		46 Bolton v Walsley	

The former Liverpool legend is happy to help Charlton strive against the drop but has one eye on his future. By Clive White

English
European
hopes
thwarted

Weekend guide to the Premiership

MATCH OF THE WEEKEND (TOMORROW, 11.30AM)



Leeds United v Manchester United



Last season: 1-0



LEEDS COULD be without Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink, their leading scorer, and midfielder David Hopkin for tomorrow's game at Elland Road with the Premiership leaders, Manchester United.

Hasselbaink, who has scored 15 Premiership goals, left the field against Charlton last week with a hamstring problem, and that is likely to lead to 18-year-old Alan Smith partnering the 20-year-old Harry Kewell up front in one of the youngest strike pairings to grace the Premiership.

Hopkin has an ankle injury and with Alfie Haaland on international duty with Norway, Gunnar Halle (knee) and Bruno Ribeiro (knee) also struggling it could lead to a recall for Stephen McPhail. The midfielder has

BY WYN GRIFFITHS

only just returned from Nigeria where he has been on Republic of Ireland duty in the World Under-20 Championships.

After seven consecutive wins Leeds have drawn their last two matches and tomorrow is the start of a run-in that sees them play all three teams above them in the League.

Leeds have a good record against their arch rivals at Elland Road in recent years, winning three of the last four - the only loss in that time, 4-0 in 1996, effectively forcing the dismissal of Howard Wilkinson.

In the last 10 years, four League games have ended goalless while in the fixture at Old Trafford in November David O'Leary's

young side gave an excellent account of themselves before losing 3-2.

Manchester United must squeeze six matches into the last three weeks of the League campaign and Alex Ferguson will have to make sweeping changes for the game which has an 11.30am kick-off. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Ronny Johnsen join Haaland on international duty with Norway, while Jaap Stam, Ryan Giggs, Paul Scholes and Andy Cole are struggling with injuries.

Stam has Achilles trouble, Giggs is still recovering from his ankle problem, while Scholes has a sore knee and Cole an ankle complaint.

The loss of Stam would be a huge blow to United as they are already missing two other

centre-backs, Johnsen and Henning Berg, who has a medial knee ligament injury.

Ferguson could turn to David May, who came on as a substitute against Sheffield Wednesday last week for his first taste of Premiership action this season, and Wes Brown, named on Thursday alongside Leeds' Jonathan Woodgate in Kevin Keegan's England squad for Hungary, or move Gary Neville across from right-back.

LEEDS UNITED (from): Marryn, Radebe, Wetherall, Wijnhard, Hasselbaink, Ribeiro, Bowyer, Hopkin, Granville, Kewell, Harce, Kvarvik, Barry, Woodgate, McPhail, Smith, Jones, Robinson.

MANCHESTER UNITED (from): Schmeichel, G. Neville, Irwin, May, Beckham, Butt, Cole, Shearer, P. Neville, Curtis, Blomqvist, Giggs, Keane, Van Der Gouw, Scholes, Yorke, Neviand, Ugg, Casper, Brown, Greening.

Referee: D. Gallagher.



Aston Villa v Nottingham Forest

Last season: no fixture

PAUL MERSON is standing by to start his first game for Aston Villa for more than a month. The England international, on the bench for the last five games, could be called upon to take over from Lee Hendrie as Villa seek to extend their unbeaten run to five games. Hendrie is struggling with an ankle injury while Alan Thompson is definitely out, with a hamstring problem. Villa have only lost at home to Forest once in their last nine meetings at Villa Park, 2-0 in October 1994.

Forest will be without no fewer than eight senior players. Ron Atkinson's men, who need to win at Villa Park to keep alive their slim hopes of Premiership survival, are unable to call upon the suspended trio of Carlton Palmer, Richard Gough and Christian Edwards. To make matters worse for Atkinson, he is also without Jon Olav Hjelde, Nigel Quashie, Geoff Thomas, Thierry Bonalair and Hugo Porfiro, who are all nursing injuries. The Norwegian defender Stale Stensaas is facing a late fitness test and Atkinson is likely to give winger Ian Woan his first start of the season. Jesper Mattsson and Chris Bart-Williams are also likely to return to the starting line-up.

ASTON VILLA (from): Bosnich, Watson, Calderwood, Southgate, Wright, Merson, Taylor, Draper, Stone, Joachum, Dublin.

NOTTINGHAM FOREST (from): Coussey, Louis-Jean, Lydie, Rogers, Stensaas, Christie, Mattsson, Altou, Johnson, Bart-Williams, Woan, Van Hoogdonk, Freeman, Shipperley, Harewood, Darcheville, Bessant.

Suspensions: Forest: Palmer, Gough, Edwards.

Referee: P. Hurkin.



Blackburn Rovers v Liverpool

Last season: 1-1

BLACKBURN'S MANAGER, Brian Kidd, will await last-minute fitness tests on Stéphane Henchoz, Christian Dailly and Gary Croft before deciding how to plug the gaps in his injury and suspension-hit side. First-choice left-back Callum Davidson serves a one-match ban, and with Jeff Kenna out for the season, Kidd has no other fully fit recognised deputy. Keith Gillespie is also suspended, but Kevin Gallacher is expected to continue his rehabilitation up front alongside top scorer Ashley Ward.

Liverpool are close to achieving two unwanted records as they face 18th-placed Blackburn. Currently 10th, Gerard Houllier's side are in danger of their lowest top-flight finish since they were relegated in 1953-54. The current tally of just 12 victories this season threatens to be their worst in any division since 1954 - they need four wins from their last five games to avoid that record. The Anfield side are without Michael Owen, Robbie Fowler, Patrik Berger and Steven Gerrard today. David Thompson, injured in the 1-0 home defeat by Leicester on Wednesday, should have recovered from a calf problem.

BLACKBURN ROVERS (from): Fian, McAtee, Hendrie, Broome, Taylor, Dailly, Croft, Johnson, Dunn, Marcolin, Carsley, Wilcox, Dull, Ward, Gallacher, Davies, Blake, Flowers.

LIVERPOOL (from): James, Song, Carragher, Babb, Matteo, Scumpton, Blythe, Thompson, Izzet, Redknapp, Leonskapp, McManaman, Riddle, Ounice, Friedel, Kvarme, Feni.

Suspensions: Blackburn: Davidson, Gillespie.

Referee: R. Hurkin.



Derby County v Southampton

Last season: 4-0

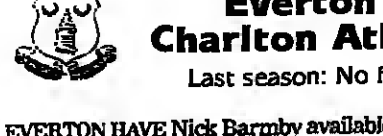
DERBY'S MIDFIELDER Stefano Erano returns today to ease Jim Smith's lengthy casualty list after missing five weeks with a calf injury. The Italian will be joined by goalkeeper Matt Poom and striker Dean Burton in making comebacks after last week's 5-1 thrashing at West Ham. Poom, less than fully fit with a hamstring problem, replaces Russell Hoult, who starts a three-match ban. Tony Dorog is Smith's latest casualty, joining Igor Stimac, Vas Borokis and Rory Delap on the sidelines.

Ken Monkou returns to strengthen Southampton's defence in place of the banned Claus Lundekvam. Matt Le Tissier is expected to recover from hamstring and calf injuries, while Latvian striker Marians Pahars is available to play after being granted permission to join up late for international duty next week. Mark Hughes has a back injury, while David Hughes faces a fitness test on a knee problem. David Hirst and John Beresford could both figure after scoring for the reserves in midweek, but goalkeeper Paul Jones and defender Richard Dryden will miss the remainder of the season with back and knee injuries.

SOUTHAMPTON (from): Moss, Dodd, Monkou, Berall, Collier, Le Tissier, Marsden, O'Hughes, Kachouli, Beattie, M. Hughes, Oosterod, Pahars, Hiley, Bridge, Monk, Stensgaard.

Suspensions: Derby: Hoult. Saints: Lundekvam.

Referee: A. Wilkie.



Everton v Charlton Athletic

Last season: No fixture

EVERTON HAVE Nick Barmby available again after suspension and are also boosted by Olivier Dacourt's escape from an FA ban earlier this week as they prepare for today's crucial relegation battle at Goodison Park. Craig Short and Kevin Campbell have both shaken off knocks and should play as Everton strive for three successive League wins for the first time since October 1996.

Alan Curbishley, the Charlton manager, has an almost full-strength squad to choose from with right-back Danny Mills available after suspension. Goalkeeper Simon Royce has started training after his injury lay-off but is well short of match fitness and Andy Petterson will continue in goal. Centre-back Richard Rufus could be playing his last game of the season unless the club manage to overturn his ban for being sent off against Leeds last Saturday.

Joint leading scorer Clive Mendonca could return to the starting line-up in place of either Andy Hunt and Martin Pringle with a lack of goals - just five in the last eight games - a major worry for Curbishley after Tuesday's 4-1 defeat by Spurs sent them back into the relegation zone.

CHARLTON ATHLETIC (from): Petterson, Powell, Brown, Youds, Mills, Tiler, Rufus, Barnes, Bowen, Kinella, Redfern, Hunt, Pringle, Bright, Stuart, K. Jones, Norton, Konchesky, Parker, Barnes, Salmon.

Referee: P. Alcock.

...And statistics Down and out down south

THE MOST sombre southern scenario would leave the six million people living in the eastern corner of England (south of the Thames) with but one Premiership representative next season: Wimbledon. Southampton, all season, and Charlton, since Christmas, have been fighting for their Premiership lives. Ten years ago, four clubs from that corner of England - Millwall, Wimbledon, Southampton and Charlton were mid table in the First Division and about to be joined via the play-offs by Crystal Palace. The year before, Portsmouth had made a one season appearance in the top flight to recall their halcyon days of the immediate post-war years.

For all the wealth that is concentrated in the south-east, the smallness of the stadiums must be a hindrance to its football development. Charlton, Wimbledon and Southampton are in the relegation positions of the Premiership attendance table even though the The Valley and The Dell are regularly filled to capacity. And other grounds, modest in capacity, have room for more supporters.

Southampton have been flying the southern flag for 21 consecutive seasons at the top level and were joined in 1986-87 by the wonder-workers of Wimbledon. Crystal Palace have given occasional support in the 90s. In only two of the ensuing seasons have Wimbledon failed to finish above Southampton. The Dons are also gaining fans, with average gates growing from 7,800 in 1987 to 17,700 today.



Wimbledon's Joe Kinnear, whose sterling efforts have made his side the clear 'south of the Thames' leaders in recent years.

A decade ago (May 1989)

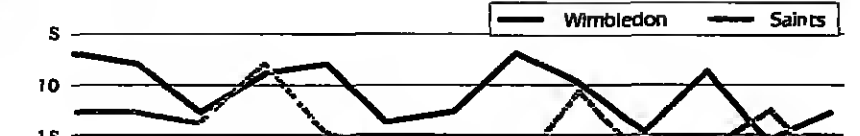
First Division	
1	Arsenal
2	Liverpool
3	Nottingham Forest
4	Norwich
5	Derby
6	Tottenham
7	Coventry
8	Everton
9	QPR
10	Millwall
11	Man Utd
12	Wimbledon
13	Southampton
14	Charlton
15	Sheff Wed
16	Luton
17	Aston Villa
18	Middlesbrough
19	West Ham
20	Newcastle

Seven post-war top flight southern sides

Club	Ground	Capacity	Average gate this season
Brighton	Priestfield, Gillingham	10,952	3,224
Charlton	The Valley	20,000	19,781
Crystal Palace	Selhurst Park	26,400	17,719
Wimbledon	Selhurst Park	26,400	17,719
Millwall	The Den	20,146	7,042
Portsmouth	Fratton Park	19,179	11,798
Southampton	The Dell	15,255	15,127

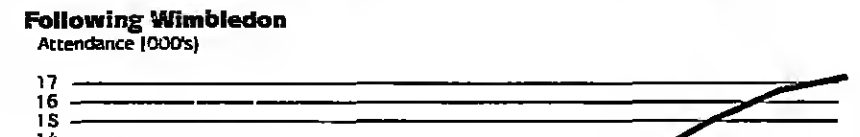
The Dons outdo the Saints

Premiership position



Following Wimbledon

Attendance (000s)



Southern Select XI by birth

Diagram showing the Southern Select XI by birth, listing players and their clubs.

Goalkeeper: M. Marryn (Leeds) b. St Austell

Defenders: A. Kinnear (Wolves) b. Poole; R. Burris (Charlton) b. Lewisham; C. Powell (Charlton) b. Lambeth; G. Le Saux (Chelsea) b. Jersey

Midfielders: J. Redknapp (Liverpool) b. Barton-on-Sea; D. Anderson (Spurs) b. Southampton; A. Townsend (Middlesbrough) b. Maudstone; S. Barry (Aston Villa) b. Hastings

Forwards: J. Wright (West Ham) b. Woolwich; M. Le Tissier (Southampton) b. Guernsey

Tomorrow's other match (4PM)

Sheffield Wednesday v Chelsea

Last season: 1-4

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY will be without left-winger Petter Rudi for the first time in six months for tomorrow's match with title-chasing Chelsea. Rudi has been called away on international duty with Norway, which means Philip Scott looks likely to take his place for his first start since his £75,000 move from St Johnstone just before deadline day. Scott came on as a second-half substitute in midweek and scored the goal - his first for the club - which gave the Owls a point from a 1-1 draw with Newcastle.

The Chelsea player-manager Gianluca Viaili, could return to lead the attack against Wednesday at Hillsborough after injury kept him out of the 1-0 Cup-winners'

Cup defeat by Real Mallorca. He is now without Norwegian striker Tore Andre Flo, whose country have invoked FIFA's five-day international rule to make first claim on him for their Euro 2000 qualifier against Georgia on Wednesday.

Viaili, who says he still wants to keep playing next season at the age of 35, also has teenage Finland striker Mikael Forsell available. Denmark midfielder Bjarne Goldbaek, who like Forsell was cup-tied for Chelsea in Europe, should also return to the starting line-up on Sunday.

England full-back Graeme Le Saux now serves a one-match suspension for his much-publicised argument with Liverpool's Robbie Fowler earlier this season. Le Saux also has an ankle injury after Thursday's game, but goalkeeper Ed de Goey has suffered no reaction playing against Real Mallorca with a broken toe and is set to continue at Hillsborough. Chelsea have won on their last two trips to Hillsborough and have only lost once in six Premiership visits.

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY (from): Snickel, Atherton, John, Newsome, Walker, Carbone, Booth, Scott, Sarsfield, Cobbin, Humphreys, Briscoe, Stefanovic, Hinchcliffe, Creswell, Emerson, Alexanderson, Sonner, Pressman, Chelsea (from): De Goey, Ferrer, Lambourde, Leboeuf, Babayaro, Di Matteo, Desailly, Ouberry, Perreux, Wise, Power, Morris, Zola, Vull, Forsell, Goldbaek, Nichols, Newton, Hitchcock (g).

Suspensions: Chelsea: Le Saux.

Referee: S. Dunn.

Leicester City v Coventry City

Last season: 1-1

EMILE HESKEY returns for Leicester City today after being called-up into the full England squad for their friendly in Hungary. Heskey has shaken off a throat infection which caused him to miss the midweek win at Anfield.

Leicester's manager, Martin O'Neill, is without Roh U-lathorne (broken leg), while Gerry Taggart (hamstring) and Muzzy Izzet (hamstring) both face late fitness tests.

Coventry's manager, Gordon Strachan, faces the prospect of going into the game without nine of his first-team players. He will be definitely be without Roland Nilsson (knee), Steve Ogrizovic (neck), Steve Froggatt (hamstring), and the suspended Noel Whelan and Gary McAllister.

There are also serious doubts over the availability of Paul Telfer who sustained a dead leg at Everton two weeks ago, Magnus Hedman, who damaged stomach muscles in last week's defeat by Middlesbrough, and Trond Solvøed and Marc Edworthy, who were both hurt in training. The Belgian international Philippe Clement and Marcus Hall return to the squad.

LEICESTER CITY (from): Keller, Arphard, Taggart, Sindal, Walsh, Izzet, Lennon, Heskey, Parker, Guppy, Gunnagsson, Savage, Kuamark, Campbell, Miller, Elliott, Marschal, Fenton, Incey, Wilson, Cottrell, Coles, Zagorakis.

COVENTRY CITY (from): Hedman, Green, Shay, Williams, Burrows, Bozeng, Solvøed, Huckerby, Afolabi, M. Hall, Clement, P. Hall, Giacchini, Delorge, Konik, Edworthy, Quinn, Kildand.

Suspensions: Coventry: McAllister, Whelan.

Referee: G. Barker.



Middlesbrough v Arsenal

Last season: no fixture

MIDDLESBROUGH WILL be without Paul Gascoigne and Gianluca Festa for the visit of Arsenal. Gascoigne is out with a dead leg and Festa has a hamstring strain. Defender Gary Pallister and midfielder Keith O'Neill are both rated as having 50-50 chances of starting, after hip and thigh problems respectively.

Dennis Bergkamp is a major doubt for Arsenal. The Dutch striker, who bounced back from missing a penalty in Arsenal's FA Cup semi-final defeat last week to become their top scorer this season on 16 goals (with one of the five against Wimbledon), has a groin injury. He was substituted after 70 minutes on Monday and must face a fitness test. Nicolas Anelka, who was rested for the Wimbledon game, will return, if Bergkamp misses out, to partner Nigerian Nwankwo Kanu in attack. Right-back Lee Dixon returns after an ankle injury but centre-back Martin Keown is suspended and Steve Bould steps in. Bergkamp's injury casts a doubt over his availability for the Netherlands' friendly against Morocco next Wednesday.

MIDDLESBROUGH (from): Schwarzer, Beresford, Stockdale, Baker, Nisbet, Vickers, Pallister, Cooper, Gordon, Summerville, Maddison, Mustoe, Townsend, O'Neill, Ricard, Deane, Armstrong, Campbell.

ARSENAL (from): Seaman, Dixon, Adams, Bould, Winterburn, Parlour, Vieira, P. Keane, Overmars, Anelka, Kanu, Bergkamp, Vivas, Grmendi, Hughes, Garde, Diawara, Boa Morre, Lukic (g).

Suspensions: Arsenal: Keown.

Referee: M. Riley.



Tottenham Hotspur v West Ham United

Last season: 1-0

THE TOTTENHAM manager, George Graham, has virtually a full squad to choose from as his side prepare for an assault on the Premiership's top six. Les Ferdinand and Andy Sinton, however, will be rested today. Ferdinand's Achilles injury, which has kept him out of the last two matches, and Sinton's ankle injury, sustained in the FA Cup semi-final, are healing ahead of schedule. Both players are expected to be fit before the season comes to an end. Goalkeeper Ian Walker, omitted from Kevin Keegan's England squad to play Hungary next week, said yesterday: "I'm happy with the way this season has turned out, considering I wasn't in the first team in August. Amazingly, I think this is the best season I ever had, and that is thanks to George Graham."

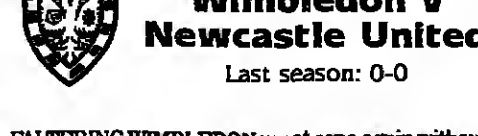
West Ham's Steve Potts is out for the season after suffering a knee injury in the Hammers' victory over Derby last week. His absence will give the manager, Harry Redknapp, a selection problem in defence. Marc-Vivien Foé and Neil Ruddock are suspended and Redknapp is hoping Rio Ferdinand passes a fitness on an ankle injury.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR (from): Walker, Carr, King, Nielsen, Campbell, Tarlico, Young, Freund, Sherwood, Nielsen, Flair, Dominguez, Clemence, Anderson, Jensen, Gindola, Armstrong, Bairstow (g).

WEST HAM UNITED (from): Halsey, Ferdinand, Pearce, Minto, Sinton, Lomas, Larnard, Keller, Berkeov, Di Canio, Wright, Cole, Moncur, Lazaridis, Forrest, Abou, Holigan.

Suspensions: None.

Referee: U. Reime.



Wimbledon v Newcastle United

Last season: 0-0

FAALTERING WIMBLEDON must cope again without key defender Chris Perry as they search for their first win in eight games. Perry, who missed Monday's 5-1 defeat at Arsenal, has broken a bone in his foot and joins Wimbledon's lengthy list of casualties. The Dons were looking for their best-ever finish in the top flight before Joe Kinnear's illness, but with one draw and six defeats in their last seven matches, they are now not even realistically in with a shout to qualify for the Inter-Toto Cup. Michael Hughes, Neal Ardley, Efan Ekoku and Jon Goodman are all out. Irish defender Kenny Cunningham has missed training this week but still hopes to be fit to play this afternoon.

Newcastle will be without the long-term casualties Laurent Charvet (knee) and Duncan Ferguson (groin). French defender Didier Domi could be back in contention after missing the last three games through injury, and keeper Shay Given will return after being rested at Sheffield Wednesday in midweek, where an Alan Shearer penalty earned the Magpies a point from the 1-1 draw.

WIMBLEDON (from): Sullivan, Cunningham, Kimble, Thatcher, Blackwell, Jupp, Roberts, Barle, Euell, C. Hughes, Castledine, Ainsworth, Kennedy, Gayle, Hartson, Carr, Leaburn, Head.

NEWCASTLE (from): Given, Harper, Barton, Griffin, Domi, Doblas, Hughes, Benarail, Lee, Speed, Solomov, Maric, Hamann, Kestba, Shearer, Anderson, Pearce, Georgiadis, Brady.

Suspensions: None.

Referee: P. Jones.



SPORT

BARNES' LAST BATTLE P28 • SCARLETS RISE AGAIN P20

United's toughest test is domestic

AS Manchester United luxuriate in their European Cup semi-final win in Turin, the paradox is that it will be easier for them to be champions of Europe than champions of England. The talk may be of trebles but the troubles are likely to come on the domestic front.

One good performance against Bayern Munich on 26 May will make them rulers of the Continent but it is going to take six in the Premiership and as that includes trips to Leeds, Liverpool, Middlesbrough and Blackburn the title is by no means a foregone conclusion.

That programme is arduous but if you had to pick a fixture most likely to trip them up

FOOTBALL
BY GUY HODGSON

then tomorrow morning's at Elland Road is the one. The bile for Alex Ferguson's team in Leeds is arguably more bitter than even that at Liverpool so if Roy Keane and co thought the atmosphere in the Stadio Delle Alpi on Wednesday was intimidating it will be nothing compared to this.

It would be a difficult fixture if Leeds were playing badly but they accumulated seven successive wins before being held to draws in their last two matches, and you have to go back to 6 February since their last League defeat. Only United

and Arsenal have better records.

"Manchester United are a fantastic side," Jonathon Woodgate, the Leeds centre-back who was called into his first England squad this week, said. "They're not liked because they win a lot of things but hopefully we'll be like that in a couple of years. I love playing against the best players because you find out how good you are. I can't wait for the game to tell you the truth."

The home team will be motivated but if Ferguson needs to gee up his players then he need only remind them of their reception at Manchester Airport in September when, by unhappy coincidence, the United

party flying to Munich bumped into Leeds fans going to Madeira. "You'd have thought we'd murdered their families," Gary Neville commented afterwards.

By tomorrow United may be off the top of the table although, if they are, Arsenal will have become only the second side this season to succeed at the Riverside. History would suggest a draw because the Gunners have not won at Middlesbrough in their last four League visits while Boro have drawn more games than they have won at home.

Arsenal are also likely to be without their top scorer Dennis Bergkamp, who has an abdominal strain and has not

trained since the FA Cup semi-final defeat by United 10 days ago.

"Without Dennis it's more difficult to score goals but at the moment all the other strikers are fit," the Arsenal manager, Arsene Wenger, said before paying tribute to Bergkamp's likely replacement, Nwankwo Kanu. "Since he has arrived he has improved a lot. What I like in his game is that he makes complicated situations look simple and he brings other players into the game."

Chelsea will be hoping both Leeds and Middlesbrough prevail because a season of much promise is suddenly looking barren and they require help from others if they can win the

one remaining trophy in their sights, the championship. Still they are likely to find Sheffield Wednesday accommodating tomorrow afternoon if the limp performance they put up at Old Trafford last week is a guide.

While the true situation at top of the table will not become apparent until Chelsea finish that game, the clouded picture at the bottom of the Premiership should be clearer by 3pm today. Nottingham Forest will be relegated unless they defeat Aston Villa at Villa Park while Everton should have put their relegation worries away for at least four months if they defeat Charlton at Goodison and record three successive

League wins for the first time since October 1996.

With Southampton taking their lamentable away record to Derby, the time is ripe for Blackburn to earn themselves breathing space, particularly as they are meeting the team who are giving Forest the best run for their money in terms of bad current form, Liverpool.

On the same night that their great rivals were reaching their second European Cup final, Liverpool, four times champions of Europe, fell to their seventh defeat in their last 12 Premiership games and are hurtling towards two unwanted landmarks. Currently 10th, they are in danger of their lowest top-flight finish since they

were relegated in 1953-54 and their tally of just 12 victories this season threatens to be their worst in any division since 1954. They need four wins from their last five games to avoid that.

"The fact we have two strikers on the sidelines means it's difficult for us," their manager, Gerard Houllier, said of the suspended Robbie Fowler and injured Michael Owen. "We're very handicapped on the offensive front and we have to overcome that. Sometimes you need some more experience and say 'OK, we can't score but let's get the point'."

A Kop close revolt will not be appeased by such negativity. The sooner the season ends, the better for Liverpool.

Clubs try to buy and shut Richmond

THERE WAS fun and games in the Allied Dunbar Premiership's bargain basement department yesterday as Bedford found themselves a new set of owners and Richmond swiftly rejected a hard-nosed - some would say cynical - manoeuvre by England's senior clubs to reduce the size of the league by paying off their debts and closing them down. Any move towards a 12-team competition for next season now depends on whether another impoverished duo, London Scottish and West Hartlepool, can find ways of staying in business.

After a harrowing season of high-profile resignations, salary delays and threatened player strikes, Bedford were breathing the fresh air of hope after confirmation that Frank Warren, the boxing promoter, had sold his 90 per cent shareholding to Jefferson Lloyd International, a corporate consultancy with recently acquired interests in other sports, including football. The new owners, who were planning to address the players before this afternoon's home match with Northampton, intend to stay at Goldington Road and, local council willing, bring the ground up to 21st century speed.

"We're not in this for 12 months only, or as long as Bedford stay in the first division," said Gary Woods, an existing director who will sit on a new three-man management board. "It's a serious venture on our part and, while we're not chucking millions at the club, we're

RUGBY UNION
BY CHRIS HEWETT

committed to success. We're confident of staying in the top flight but, whatever happens, we'll work to keep the existing squad together."

Richmond, meanwhile, were "90 per cent confident" of generating sufficient new money by the end of next month to ensure a future for themselves in the professional game. Currently in financial administration following an abrupt decision by their major backer, Ashley Levett, to drastically reduce his investment, Richmond have just over five weeks to piece together a rescue package.

They know they are treading water in a shark-infested sea; English First Division Rugby, the powerful senior clubs' umbrella organisation, this week discussed the possibility of buying Richmond with a view to pulling the rug from under them. "We are fully determined to retain our independence," said Tony Hallett, the former Richmond chief executive who has co-ordinated the efforts of club loyalists to find new backing.

There were striking developments at one of Britain's richest clubs yesterday when Cardiff, now nearing the end of their season-long political battle with the Welsh Rugby Union, announced that Terry Holmes would vacate the Arms Park coaching job at the end of the season while only halfway through a two-year contract.



Northamptonshire's Matthew Hayden, Rob Bailey, David Ripley and Tony Pemberton at a washed-out Hove yesterday

David Ashdown

Players agree to World Cup deal

CRICKET

BY MYLES HODGSON

ENGLAND'S PLAYERS have averted a possibly damaging contract dispute ahead of this summer's World Cup by accepting revised terms offered by Lord's for the forthcoming tournament.

Negotiations between the England and Wales Cricket Board and the 15-man squad, which both sides had hoped to have completed before their recent Coca-Cola Cup campaign in Sharjah, had become worryingly protracted and distracting. But, after being given a deadline of 26 April to sign the new contract, which would earn them around £45,000 per man should they become the first host country to win the World Cup, or risk being replaced in the final squad, the players have now signalled their intention to sign the contract.

"All the lads have now agreed to sign their contracts and we're looking forward to playing in the tournament and to hopefully achieving success," the England captain, Alec Stewart, said.

The main stumbling block during the negotiations, which had a disruptive influence on morale during their time in Sharjah and the week-long training camp in Lahore, had been the structure of payment during the seven-week tournament. The players wanted a change to the disparity between being selected for the squad and playing in the World Cup, extra security in case of injury before the tournament began, and the difference between the basic fee and the bonus money brought closer together.

Those amendments to the original contract were agreed by the Board, although the players' hopes of matching the £1m promised to their rugby union counterparts for their World Cup were thwarted by the ECB chief executive Tim Lamb's insistence that no more money would be on offer. The fund will be made up of around £200,000 from the team sponsors Vodafone, £187,500 tournament prize money and the remainder coming from the ECB's coffers - which are limited by its failure to attract only four of the anticipated eight World Cup sponsors.

Although Lamb estimated English cricket would benefit by around £12m from the tournament, he underlined the ECB's responsibility to the grass roots of the sport and insisted the game would not overstretch itself financially to suit the players.

He said: "I'm pleased we've resolved the outstanding points in the contract. I'm sure everyone will now want to focus completely on the World Cup campaign."

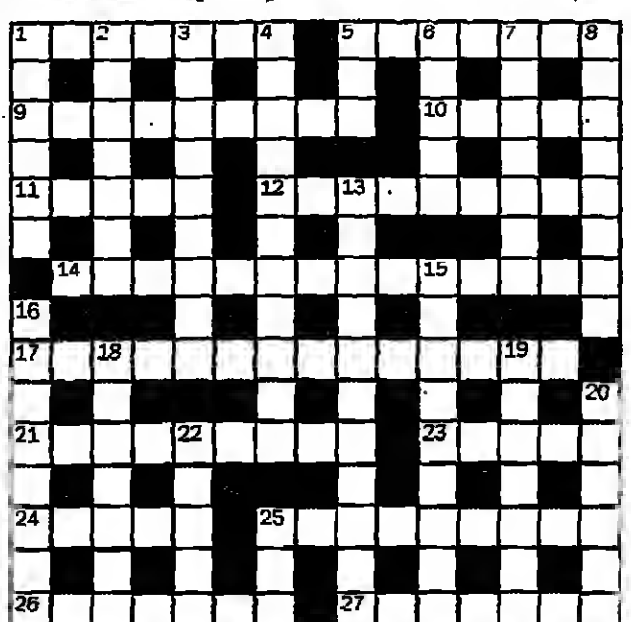
It is hard to fathom how a game so dependent on the weather was invented in a country with England's climate.

Scoreboard, page 21

THE SATURDAY CROSSWORD

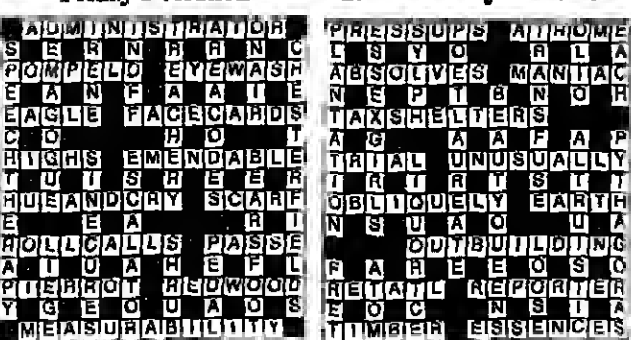
No.3905 Saturday 24 April

By Phi



Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



ACROSS

DOWN

- 1 Company doctor full of fun? (7)
- 5 Crowd intent to chase out English pedlar (7)
- 9 Pressurised, head of school busters badly (9)
- 10 Caught the stench from the river (5)
- 11 Open University's new and better (5)
- 12 Bewitched singer pulling up short in finale (9)
- 14 One may have an eye for solving clues (9,5)
- 17 Reconstructed arbour's area with oil lights at night (6,8)
- 21 The blaze, bursting out, traps one girl (9)
- 23 Make speech flowery? That's not new (5)
- 24 Take care about first of wood chopped (5)
- 25 What sounds like girl's next purchase in gardening store? (9)
- 26 Symbol of revolution associated with Soviet holiday? (7)
- 27 Urge senior teacher to produce clever student? (7)

- 1 Helmet question features in trial (6)
- 2 Vehicle pulled up within distance - a wonder (7)
- 3 Drop out, being badly appraised (9)
- 4 The sort of books that show pictures of feet bound in rope? (6,8)
- 5 China, white, slightly chipped (3)
- 6 Exclamation by one swallowing cold drink that should be hot (5)
- 7 Expert seen in some art broadcast (7)
- 8 Applied to "What the Butler Saw" machines? (5,3)
- 13 The cost of restaurant tablecloths? (5,6)
- 15 Spicy stuff popular in sailor's shanty (9)
- 16 Town lawyer in America raving "Hang em!" (8)
- 18 Track bird, having the means (7)
- 19 Think I'm fashionable (and mature about it) (7)
- 20 Argue for termination after getting fed up (6)
- 22 Sound reproduction equipment imported by Saudi organisation (5)
- 25 Cover barring Derbyshire's first run? (3)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: K Kemp, Gosfield; G Alexander, Pevensy Bay; J Harris, Holmes Chapel; A Maguire, Dublin; J Myer, Bromley.

Counties struggling to keep heads above water

BY ADAM SZRETER

WITH THE second round of the County Championship due to finish today and just one positive result from the 11 matches completed so far, it would be fair to say the earliest-ever start to a season has not been a resounding success. Owing to weather more in keeping with well, mid-April rather than mid-spring, the last domestic season before next year's streamlining of the first-class counties is taking an age to thaw.

The reason for beginning on 13 April, when Durham's Chester-le-Street ground was snowbound, is a congested summer featuring the World Cup, followed by four Tests against New Zealand, the new National League and Super Cup and an expanded NatWest Trophy.

Mike Gatting, the England selector now installed as first-team coach at Middlesex who, along with Warwickshire, were

unfortunate enough to have two home Championship fixtures scheduled in the first two weeks, nevertheless believes the England Cricket Board has missed at least one trick.

"I think the World Cup has prompted everything to go into April this year and rain is just one of those things," Gatting said after his side's match against Lancashire was abandoned yesterday without a ball being bowled. "The problem is that games can go on till 7.40pm and it gets very dark at that time. I think it was a slight oversight."

Warwickshire's Brumbrella might have saved more of their game with Somerset had flat sheets not been outlawed. Their chief executive, Dennis Amis, said: "It is disappointing when you think that 25 per cent of our Championship cricket at Edg-

baston is already over and we've only had a couple of innings against Northants and one against Somerset."

"I can see pools of water all over the ground and Sunday's match against Worcester must be doubtful. For a local derby like that on a decent day you'd expect five or six thousand people, so that could cost us about £25,000."

At Leicestershire, where the match against Nottinghamshire was abandoned as a draw, manager Jack Brimshaw called for a later start and finish.

"I believe that mid-April is far too early to be playing Championship cricket," he said. "I think it would be far better to start in May and go on until the end of September or early October."

It is hard to fathom how a game so dependent on the weather was invented in a country with England's climate.

Scoreboard, page 21

IN MONDAY'S 12-PAGE SPORTS SECTION

Derek Pringle on the Scotland team preparing to take on the leading cricket nations in the World Cup
Glenn Moore reports from Elland Road as Leeds United aim to bring Manchester United back to earth.
Chris Hewett on Leicester's campaign to bring the English rugby union title back to Welford Road

WEEKEND REVIEW

COMMENT • ARTS & BOOKS • COUNTRY & GARDEN • TRAVEL

**OLD JOKES:
20 YEARS OF THE
COMEDY STORE**

ARTS, PAGE 10



**ANNA PAVORD
IN YOUR
BACK YARD**

GARDENING, PAGE 15



**DOWN UNDER:
IS DIVING THE
NEW SKIING?**

TRAVEL, PAGE 20



What a gas!



Tom Lubbock, after Caspar David Friedrich

Discovered by an obscure 18th-century poet, inhaled by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, put to good use by dentists ever since, nitrous oxide is a most cultured gas. What's more, it makes you laugh...

Two hundred years ago, on 17 April 1799, a young English poet resident in Bristol took up a green silk bag and set himself deliberately to inhaling a full four quarts of a mysterious new substance, generally known as gaseous azote, or oxide of septon, or dephlogisticated nitrous gas. It was a brave, perhaps even a foolhardy experiment, but the youth's courage was rewarded almost instantly. He felt a "highly pleasurable thrilling particularly in the chest and the extremities. The objects around me became dazzling and my hearing more acute. Towards the last inspirations, the thrilling increased."

The reckless young poet and researcher (we would now call him a "scientist", a term still uncoined in 1799) was Humphry Davy; the substance was nitrous oxide, vulgarly referred to by generations of dental patients as "laughing gas"; and Davy's risky experiment, written up and published the following year as *Researches, Chemical and Philosophical, Chiefly Concerning Nitrous Oxide... and its Respiration*, made him an intellectual star at the age of 21. Davy was quick to grasp at least some of the implications of his experiences, tentatively predicting that nitrous oxide "...may probably be used with advantage during surgical operations in which no great effusion of blood takes place". Even in his exalted or "literally" "inspired" state, however, Davy was not quite prophet enough to foresee the future career of his gas in all its peculiarity. Two hundred years on, we can see that Davy's deep gulps of N₂O had their consequences not just for dentistry but also for poetry, philosophy, psychology and show business; and the full implications of that pioneering encounter are once again becoming the subject of lively debate.

For example, the author and journalist Mike

Jay, who has included several coteremporary accounts of the nitrous oxide breakthrough in his forthcoming Penguin anthology of drug literature, *Artificial Paradises*, considers that Davy's heavy breathing marks "a significant - though largely unrecognised - milestone in the history of science and the modern mind", not least because: "As a deliberate intoxication by a new chemical substance not found in nature, it may... stand as the birth of modern synthetic or 'designer' drugs in general... it was the moment which opened the portal to world upon world of experience which, before Davy's experiment, would have been unimaginable."

Mr Jay's version of Humphry Davy as "the first modern psychonaut" may seem rather outlandish to those brought up on uplifting tales of Davy as the philanthropic gentleman who invented the safety lamp for miners. And yet it isn't so very far from the view of Davy held by

BY KEVIN JACKSON

his friends and co-experimentalists, particularly his fellow poets. Robert Southey, for one, was quite clear about his bedonistic motives for assisting Davy, and wrote to one of his circle in terms of bubbling enthusiasm: "Oh, Tom! such a gas has Davy discovered! Oh, Tom! I have had some. It made me laugh and tingle in every toe and fingertip. It makes one strong, and so happy! So gloriously happy! Oh excellent gas bag! Tom, I am sure the air in heaven must be this wonderful working gas of delight."

The playwright John Tobin stressed the similarities between a hit of N₂O and the exaltations of literary art. "The feelings," he wrote, "resembled those produced by a representation of an heroic scene on the stage, or by reading a sublime passage in poetry when circumstances contribute to awaken the finest sympathies of the soul." And though most readers will know something about Coleridge's long and sorry tryst

with opium, history has largely forgotten that he was also fond of nitrous oxide. After inhaling some, Coleridge reported that he "could not avoid, nor indeed felt any wish to avoid, beating the ground with my feet; and after the mouth-piece was removed, I remained for a few seconds motionless, in great ecstasy."

Later in life, Coleridge referred admiringly to Davy as "the Father and Founder of philosophic Alchemy, the man who, born a poet, first converted Poetry into Science and realised what few men possessed Genius enough to fancy."

With fans of this calibre, it was little wonder that Davy's discovery soon became the object of a craze, and that some of the leading public figures of the day made their way to Bristol to breathe his heavenly new air. Peter Mark Roget, later famous for his thesaurus but at the time a rising doctor, the engineer James Watt, who gave Davy a hand with the construction of new gas masks and chambers; and the master potter Josiah Wedgwood.

Reputable men, one and all, but it was not long before the practice of inhaling N₂O became highly disreputable, not to say scandalous. Rumours began to spread about staid ladies driven to acts of gross impropriety by their inhalations. One of these reports spoke of a plucky miss who took her intoxicating lungful and ran amok.

"To the astonishment of everybody, the young lady dashed out of the room and house when, racing down Hope-square, she leaped over a great dog in her way, but being both pursued by the fleetest of her friends, the fair fugitive, or rather the temporary maniac, was at length overtaken and pursued, without further damage." (Something there for the next, "controversial" TV adaptation of *Jane Austen*?)

Thanks to this and similar episodes, the practice of inhaling nitrous oxide came to be seen as dangerous and depraved. "Pneumatic

Continued on page 2

AA



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						TRAVEL

TOMORROW IN
THE INDEPENDENT
ON SUNDAY

CULTURE

Richard Williams on the poet
in Bruce SpringsteenHow I came to look like this
by Harold Pinter

COMMENT

Peregrine Worsthorne
explains why this woman
destroyed Conservatism

REAL LIFE

Why the Bible is required
reading for the fashion crowd

PLUS

Michael Bywater
Alain de Botton
Simon Singh
AN Wilson
Will Self



Bullfighting No 6: Young novilleros getting ready for a bullfight in Navaluenga, in central Spain

David Rose

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL and include a daytime telephone number, fax to 0171 293 2056 or e-mail to letters@independent.co.uk (e-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address). Letters may be edited for length and clarity

Balkan dilemma

Sir: When will the West learn that the only approach to take towards a military conflict is a direct one? The "campaign" in the Balkans is running on, and shows signs that it will continue to do so, with no decisive result in sight.

From time to time we see reports of air attacks against targets in Iraq, some nine years down the line. The tentative approach to conducting a relatively low-risk campaign over an extended period of time ends up causing more damage, more hardship and more casualties than a short, decisive engagement drawn up under tight military control and conducted with precise political objectives.

Dragging situations out with no decisive conclusion not only harms the civilian populations in the region, it also leads to heightened tension between world powers, ongoing cost and the risk of maintaining an active military presence a long way from the territory that they exist to protect. If this is not realised, there will be precious few Six Day Wars for us in the future, to the detriment of all.

JOHN SPENCER
Uxbridge, Middlesex

Sir: I have campaigned against Milosevic's actions for at least as long as Ken Livingstone ("Why we are not wrong to compare Milosevic to Hitler", 21 April), in Belgrade as well as London, but I am greatly worried that the only policy to emerge so far from the total failure of Nato's actions is the further escalation of bombing.

The only choice for the future being presented is not just more of the same but invasion. The Kosovan Albanians have suffered for more than a decade without significant protests from Western nations. They are now part of a catastrophe to which Nato has contributed. Macedonia and Montenegro cannot escape the creeping spread of this mad war for more than a few days. And then what?

The Russian extremists are waiting in the wings and there is serious, if rusty, nuclear fire-power lying around.
TONY SMYTHE
London N4

Teenage misfits

Sir: The goth movement is not "obsessed with Satanism and medieval torture" ("The misfits who killed for kicks", 22 April). That is a wildly inaccurate description of a complicated (and popular) American subculture.

The goth "movement" - which is a misnomer - is a style of music (often moody, melodic, slow electronic music with an abundance of minor chords - not Marilyn Manson, but bands like Bauhaus), a style of dress (wearing a lot of black, copying Victorian styles and 19th-century arcanas) and a social group. It is not an exclusively American movement.

Satanism and the goth movement are not synonymous. Many "goths" are teenagers, to whom Satanism has a certain rebellious appeal, but are not in any way dangerous people.

If you're going to link these boys with a subculture, the militia movement is far more accurate, with its obsession with war games and guns, than the goth movement. Most "goths" I have known spend their time writing apocalyptic poetry and traipsing through graveyards, trying to look poetic and pale.

They are mostly social misfits who can find acceptance in a subculture with very different social norms from the rest of American teenage society. What better way to rebel against the sunny disposition of the jock/cheerleader stereotype than by cultivating a calculated depression?

ALICE MARWICK
Seattle, Washington, USA

Sir: In your report, "Ride association told to stay away from city" (23 April), you state that "Mr Heston sounded an altogether less conciliatory note, arguing that a teacher with a concealed weapon might have been able to curtail the violence".

Surely, teachers with concealed weapons holding a shoot-out with armed students in trenchcoats is a recipe for a far bloodier disaster than what occurred in Colorado.
JEFFREY BAUMGARTNER
Brussels

St George legend

Sir: Another St George's Day, another article questioning our allegiance to "a gentleman from Asia Minor" and informing us that nobody cares anyway ("Cry: God for Harry! England and Saint Who?", 23 April).

The article fails to address the central question over why the legend of St George has provided a source of inspiration for English people over the centuries. The reason is because of what the legend represents - the triumph of good over evil. The origin and nature of the man himself is of little significance.

While it may be true that the majority of English people do not overtly mark the day, I believe that this is indicative less of a lack of desire to rejoice in our achievements as a nation but more to do with feeling uncomfortable with the concept of celebrating an English national day.

This is engendered in no small part by a government that cares little for England as an entity, television controllers that devote no air time whatsoever to signifying St George's Day and journalists who seek to dampen down any enthusiasm that may spontaneously erupt.

A SAWYER
Edinburgh

Sir: Anne McElvoy makes the extremely common error of stating that St Augustine converted the British to a new faith. He didn't. He converted the pagan English in Kent.

The British (subsequently known as "Welsb", an Old High German word meaning "foreign") had been Christian for centuries. There were British bishops at the Council of Arles, AD314, nearly 300 years before Augustine.

It is known that traders from the Mediterranean were visiting Britain even before the Romans (also pagans) arrived, and so it is almost certain that there were Christians in Britain from the very earliest days, as the legend of St Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury would seem to indicate.
BENEDICT BAKER
Brecon, Powys

King of the road

Sir: Geoffrey Thompson speaks of the "enormous" savings that can be made by giving up a car in London and taking taxi rides out of town, while William Kall (Letters, 21 April) claims that car ownership for the urban user "costs a fortune".

One wonders how obliging SE13's taxi drivers are, and what cars Mr Kall has in mind. Between 1994 and 1998 I lived mostly in London. I went to work on the Tube, but needed a car for social and other purposes at the weekend. In 1994 I bought a second-hand 1980s saloon for £535.

During the following four and-a-half years it covered 45,000 miles at 35mpg. It cost £120pa for insurance, £350pa, on average, for repairs and servicing (with minor work being done at home), £150pa in tax, £70pa in breakdown insurance and £75 to have it scrapped when it wore out. It broke down only four times.

It went all over the country, on all kinds of roads, at all times of day and night, often at short notice. Taking taxis to all the places that car went would not have saved a fortune.

Carlessness is probably acceptable for a bachelor leading a quiet, settled life with few out-of-town social contacts, or with a life that can be planned, in detail, a long time in advance. But it is not practicable for most of us, even if the car rests unused during the week.
HEON STEVENSON
Brighton

Church's shares

Sir: Your diary piece "Church drops BAE shares" (Business Review, 21 April) is

misleading. The Church of England has never held shares in British Aerospace.

The Church's long-standing ethical investment policy is not to invest in companies whose main business is in the production of armaments.

The Church of England's Ethical Investment Working Group has reviewed the Church's holding in GEC in the light of the proposed sale of Marconi Defence Systems, the defence arm of GEC, to BAE.

It has recommended that the church does not retain shares acquired in the "new" British Aerospace, should the sale go ahead.

GEC without Marconi Defence Systems would retain no defence involvement whatsoever and would be retained, like other holdings, subject to Church investors' investment and ethical criteria.

ARUN KATARIA
Communications Officer
The Church of England
Church Commissioners
London SW1

Child sex crimes

Sir: Philip Sweeney's sympathetic treatment of convicted paedophiles in the Philippines (The Independent Magazine, 17 April) missed out the most important thing of all - the compelling evidence from the child victims themselves.

Had Philip taken the time to visit the Preda Children's Home when he was investigating the Olongapo paedophile sex bars, he could have talked to some of the 46 child victims in therapeutic recovery, ages ranging from six to 16.

Labelling the 20 Preda staffers who care for these child victims as part of a "coalition of paedophile vigilantes", is irate and unjust. Stating that we moved to have judges dismissed for failing to convict is untrue.

Michael Clarke was found guilty of violating Republic Act 7610. This law makes it a crime to offer minors for prostitution. The court found the ITN video of Clarke allegedly making such offers

compelling evidence, as well as a poster he had made advertising sex orgies and more besides.

The allegation that I "condemn opponents by association and exaggeration", and the insinuation that we cut corners and bend the rules, in helping the children to bring their cases to court is baseless.

Philip Sweeney also failed to note that we vigorously campaign against the death penalty, which causes more heinous crimes against children and prevents nothing.

Had he spent more time with the official record and less in the kiddie sex clubs he would have enlightened and informed your readers and done justice to the children, who are the forgotten victims in his story.

FR SHAY CULLEN
Preda Foundation
Olongapo City
Philippines

IN BRIEF

Sir: Gay rights campaigners responded to the Lords vote against lowering the homosexual age of consent last Tuesday by claiming that the Lords were out of touch. Out of touch with whom? The Lords have consistently voted against lowering the age of consent to 16. This accurately reflects the wishes of the electorate who are themselves two-thirds against this measure. It is the House of Commons and the Government that are out of touch with people of this nation.
MICHAEL BELL
Horsham, Sussex

Sir: In recent years, BBC presenters have shown an increasing inability to enunciate the word "sixth", pronouncing it as "sick". This affliction was originally confined to newscasters and reporters, but has now spread across the corporation. Most recently, members of the public are beginning to fall prey to the affliction. Can anyone offer an explanation?
PHIL SMITH
Rugby, Warwickshire

What
a gas!

Continued from page 1
"medicine" went rapidly out of fashion and the inhalation of nitrous oxide became associated with mesmerism, animal magnetism and other sordid phenomena.

But the visionary gas could not be so easily confined. Blown out by the doctors, it drifted across the Atlantic and went into showbiz, being taken up by creative entrepreneurs, including the celebrated circus man P.T. Barnum. Crowds flocked to see Barnum's "Laughing Gas" exhib-

itions much as they now go to see a Paul McKenna stage hypnotism show. "The effect of the gas," as one poster advised punters in 1844, "is to make those who inhale it either LAUGH, SING, DANCE, SPEAK or FIGHT..." (The same poster stressed that "The Gas will be given only to gentlemen of the first respectability. The object is to make the entertainment in every respect a genteel affair." Of course, of course.)

One of the punters who attended this very show was Horace Wells, a local dentist who had already been experimenting with techniques of anaesthesia. He acquired some N₂O, inhaled it, and - as his wife put it - "made a spectacle of himself". Undaunted, he persevered, and asked a colleague to knock him out with a strong dose of the substance and then remove one of his teeth. Eur-

eka: nitrous oxide was firmly launched on its errand of mercy to humankind's rotten teeth.

The rest of that side of the N₂O story is well enough documented. The story of its adventures in the realm of ideas and sensations is patchier, and stands in need of further research. Coleridge and Southey were certainly not the last poets to have used nitrous oxide as a gateway into other modes of perception - Allen Ginsberg, for one, wrote a lengthy ode about his hours under laughing gas. But when the full history of N₂O comes to be written, one name is bound to dominate the field: that of William James, the great American psychologist, writer and philosopher. In *Varieties of Religious Experience*, James wrote: "Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it,



You've gotta laugh: Leslie Phillips loses it in 'Doctor in Clover' Kobl

is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the finest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different." Of all the experiences that had led him to this conclusion, James said, the most important was his own inhalation of oxide - a gas which can "stimulate the mystical consciousness in an extraordinary degree". He said: "I know more than one person who is persuaded that in the nitrous oxide trance we have a genuine metaphysical revelation."

There are distinct similarities between James's accounts of "mystical" states of consciousness and those recorded by Davy after his own sessions with the gas. "Every thing seemed alive, and myself part of the series of visible impressions; I should have felt pain in tearing a

leaf from one of the trees..." Davy's work with nitrous oxide is to be commemorated by the medical profession at a conference a few weeks hence, and - so rumour has it - by less orthodox souls in less sober ways, too. Whatever our attitude to drugs, to mysticism or (come to that) to poetry, it seems only fair that we should celebrate Humphrey Davy's bold intakes of breath 200 years ago by remembering him as a more complex, more unsettling and considerably more visionary man than the boringly worthy, rag-to-riches hero of Victorian folklore; to remember him, among other things, as the man who came round from a nitrous oxide trance shouting the thrilling news that "Nothing exists but thoughts!"

As old hippies everywhere might put it: Davy was a real gas.

MONITOR

ALL THE NEWS OF THE WORLD

Columbine High School Massacre • Ground war in Kosovo • Liz Tilberis • Manchester United • Brixton bomb

GROUND WAR IN KOSOVO

The British press contemplates the possibility of Nato sending troops on the ground into Kosovo

DAILY MAIL

NATO'S LEADERS seem to be edging towards the conclusion that a ground attack is necessary. But if they are going to take this giant step, they will have to start preparing for it now. The West took the decision to open hostilities. Now it must show the resolution to finish the job. But winning the war will not be the end of the problem for the West. The Alliance would take over a Kosovo that is utterly devastated. Rebuilding will require a vast Western aid effort. Meanwhile British and Nato troops may be stuck in the province for a generation. There will be no glory in victory. Just a smouldering battlefield and the prospect of long, thankless years spent in maintaining a bitter and uneasy peace. It is all a terrible mess.

THE ECONOMIST

GRADUALLY THE government is abandoning its belief that Nato will not have to fight its way in. But it does not favour a full invasion. Is there a third way? In the House of Commons this week Robin Cook conceded that he could imagine circumstances in which Milosevic had not yet admitted defeat but in which his forces were in retreat and unable to put up much of a fight. You can see at once the special appeal to Blair of such an eventuality. If only an unopposed invasion by relatively light forces could do the business. Then Britain could be seen to pull its weight, despite having relatively little military weight to pull.

THE TIMES

AT PRESENT, British and American opinion, shocked by the plight of the refugees, dismayed by the political ineffectiveness of the bombing, seems to be moving in favour of invasion. This movement of opinion is not shared on the Continent. I doubt if it could be relied on even here or in the US if the troops did actually go in. The British have been horrified by the television pictures of human suffering, but television is a short-term, high-impact medium in which new images constantly obliterate the old ones. At present the emotional case for a Balkan war seems very powerful, but as Robert Walpole said of war with Spain in 1739: "They now ring the bells, but they will soon wring their hands."

THE MIRROR

IF BLAIR now decides to send in ground troops, we will again back him to the hilt. We do not say this because we are warmongers. Nothing would please us more than to see an end to further bloodshed. We say it because we can see no other way of halting the genocidal scorched-earth policy of Milosevic. The West is determined to end his reign of terror. When he sees the armies of democracy massed on the borders of Kosovo he'd better believe that they are not there for show. They will crush him. And *The Mirror* will be supporting them all the way.

NEW STATESMAN

FIVE PRACTICAL questions must be raised. First, can the bombing work? Second, can we put in ground forces? Third, can we risk our own blood? Fourth, can Nato hold together? Fifth, can we afford it? Only if the answers to all these questions are clearly "yes" should Nato press the war to a conclusion. If the answer to any one of them is "no", it should pursue a peace deal, based on the partition of Kosovo, at the earliest possible moment. To do otherwise would be irresponsible and, since more Balkan lives would be sacrificed to no end, inhumane.

EVENING STANDARD

IF NATO begins a big ground build-up now, the generals will tell the Nato leaders, there is a good chance of being able to launch a decisive incursion. A Nato military man has said: "The only way the Serbs can win is if the Alliance falls apart." But, to put the matter the other way around: the only way the Alliance can be sure of winning within a politically acceptable timeframe is to put in ground troops whether or not Milosevic has signed their passports. (Max Hastings)

Armed and trigger-happy kids

ARIZONA REPUBLIC

IT IS no longer enough to simply wag our fingers at the raft of usual suspects. This time, we can't allow ourselves to simply scowl at the National Rifle Association. Or at disintegrating families and bleak, cynical television that trivializes life. We can't simply rage at bloody video games. Not this time. This Black Death is spreading too far, too fast. This time we cannot just chuck our tongues and, when the walling is done, simply walk away.

THE WASHINGTON POST

THE NATIONAL arsenal of America is notorious worldwide. Outcasts seeking attention get it when they are armed. It emboldens kids in rural as well as urban settings and from all social groups. Law enforcement authorities - those on the front lines - continue to urge more attention to public safety, as do voters in more and more states. How many more tragedies like this one in Colorado must it take for the country to stop feeding firepower so freely to its youth?

FREE LANCE STAR
Virginia

WHAT HAPPENED comes easier in a culture where much of the "entertainment" is blood-drenched and where gunsmoke is depicted as redemptive. When we endlessly "consume" this drek, something else is being consumed in the process. "I looked into his eyes," a survivor said of one of the killers. "There was nothing there."

THE CORNING LEADER
New York

LITTLETON IS no different than a thousand other communities struggling with the impersonal texture of modern suburban life. It has hurried boulevards clogged with commuters, clone-home neighborhoods filled with professional-level migrant families, parents holding down multiple jobs, overworked police trying to keep a lid on vandalism and vagrancy, and giant schools where hurting kids scream for help with silent voices. We believe the time for talk



COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL MASSACRE

American comment on the shooting dead of thirteen people in a Colorado school by two teenage pupils, members of the self-styled 'Trenchcoat Mafia'

and excuses has passed. We should pledge to give our children what they need - love and personal attention. We must not give in to the evil of humanity's violent history, but must overcome evil with good.

INTELLIGENCER-RECORD
Philadelphia

SOCIETY ITSELF is to blame for much of what's been happening on our streets and in our schools. Life has been cheapened; values have been compromised; doing the right thing has been replaced by doing anything. Can we be genuinely surprised when young people see solutions in violence? After all, they have a lot of source material (adults) from which to draw.

CORPUS CHRISTI
CALLER TIMES
Texas

WHATEVER DEVILS plague a tortured

psyche, access to a gun magnifies them. Every bloody rampage by the disaffected and the deranged is an argument that this nation pays a terrible price for its reluctance to restrict firearms. We must also try to understand the anger and disaffection that is growing along the fringes of the teenage crowds. We may not understand what causes such dark fantasies to grow or what nurtures them. But we can stop them before they explode as they did on Tuesday.

DENVER POST
Colorado

In stunned disbelief, we have watched the tragedy at Columbine High School unfold. We have prayed for the students and faculty. We have prayed for the families who waited in numbed torment to learn the fate of those they loved. We have prayed for the police who risked their own lives. And we have no answers. The reasons behind this act of mindless, senseless violence elude us now and, perhaps,

will elude us forever. Nor will any answer ever be acceptable.

WASHINGTON TIMES

HOW DO we prevent another school shooting from happening? We try by making sure that this nation's children grow up with the awareness that we are created in the image of God and that therefore the loss of even one individual is a tragedy - let alone the loss of 15 youngsters who should have had all their bright lives before them.

HURON DAILY TRIBUNE
Michigan

EVERY SCHOOL has its outcasts. Every child exposed to TV has seen hundreds of portrayals of killings. Are we fated to have more senseless mass murders? We must find a way to defuse the anger and end their hopelessness.

LIZ TILBERIS

Tributes to Liz Tilberis, former editor of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, who died from ovarian cancer this week

EVENING STANDARD

HER GREATEST achievement was in her prolonged battle against ovarian cancer. When the disease struck, she proceeded to speak publicly about it, to raise funds for cancer charities and to write coherently about her condition. In this, as in her whole career, Liz Tilberis helped and comforted untold thousands of women. (Mimi Spencer)



While hospitalized in December 1993 and again in the summer of 1995 she oversaw each issue of the magazine, which she had edited since 1992.

THE TIMES

ALTHOUGH LIZ Tilberis had many of the characteristics of women who reach the top in fashion journalism, such as a ruthless determination and the ability to undermine the efforts of rivals by word, thought and deed, she was not really a fashion person. She was far too

pleasant for that. A born maverick, she was always strong, wilful and disinclined to allow others to write rules for her, and nobody was surprised that she kept her fighting spirit to the end. She fought death with humour and panache. As she said in her book "I can't afford to have bad hair days. I've seen the dark side of the moon." It engulfed her too early.

DAILY MAIL

NO ONE ever fought harder for life than Elizabeth Tilberis, the ordinary girl from the Midlands who by dint of talent, humour and guts, conquered New York as editor of *Harper's Bazaar*. She could call the Princess of Wales her close friend and even seemed to have defied ovarian cancer. But then, beneath her feminine demeanour and that wicked sense of humour, she did have a core of well-polished steel. She put it down to the doggedness of her Irish genes. (Grenda Polan)

MANCHESTER UNITED

The Italian press considers the defeat of their team Juventus at the hands of Man Utd

TUTTOSPORT

AN OUTSTANDING Manchester United has knocked Juventus out of the European Cup semi-finals. Arrogant though Alex Ferguson may be, his team are both magnificent and divine in equal measure. After the suffering of their 1-1 draw in the first leg, they managed to put on a majestic performance in Turin. And they deserved to win, thanks to the superb skill of Cole, who produced a truly wonderful display of football.

LA GAZETTA
DELLO SPORT

DESPITE ALL its talk about dictating the play, Juventus let Manchester United take the initiative, and was punished in the most atrocious manner. Juventus put on a mask for the Old Trafford encounter, vaunting confidence, but underneath they had a face transfigured by fear, the first headed goal by Keane revealed that. We will

debate for years what led to this tactical suicide from the most experienced team that exists, but let's join in the applause of the stadium for the Manchester players. In the bitterness of a magic night, we are left with the image of a magnificent team that knew how to dare away, and in front of their worst enemies, even though they started from a terrible psychological situation.

CORRIERE DELLO
SPORT

AFTER JUVENTUS'S initial burst of flame, which should have reduced the English to ash, they instead decided to sit back, hoping, or at least thinking, that they could live off that incredible lead. It was a fatal mistake, because Manchester took the match in hand, backed Juventus into a corner and showed what they know how to do best - and that's play fast, well-organised, courageous and powerful football.

BRIXTON BOMB

Reaction to the nail bomb which exploded in a busy market street at the weekend

SOUTH LONDON PRESS

IT IS almost impossible to comprehend the mentality of that person who made and primed that bomb, and then left it in the middle of Brixton knowing that it would maim dozens of people, black and white. I was also incensed by the way certain "community leaders" immediately denounced it as a "race hate" backlash. It may well have been, but in the aftermath of Saturday's blast, no one knew for sure and to bandy that sort of rhetoric about was inflammatory and insensitive. (Jim Blunt)

THE TIMES

BRIXTON IS a resilient place, however. It has had to be. With more than its fair share of troubles in the past 30 years, it has learnt to turn adversity to its advantage. Lacking wealth, jobs and beauty, Brixton has seen race riots and race hatred,

police brutality and police victimisation, segregation and prejudice. There have been national inquiries and government resolutions. But since 1981, the district has fought back. Urban regeneration, imaginative integration, the kindling of ethnic pride amid racial diversity have made Brixton now a symbol more of hope than deprivation. No wonder Nelson Mandela asked to go there. Its streets hum with life; no deranged terrorist can destroy their vibrant variety.

THE EXPRESS

SOME OF those hurt will never recover from their injuries and none will forget the moment that changed their lives. For the rest of Britain, this despicable act of violence has raised, yet again, the spectre of terrorism. Saturday's bomb had nothing to do with Northern Ireland but has reminded us all of one simple truth - that there is nothing more important than peace.

QUOTES OF
THE WEEK

"Success is the only exit strategy I am prepared to consider." Tony Blair (above) on the Kosovo war

"That would be difficult." Sir Edward Heath to Baroness Thatcher when she told him at a photocall: "You should be on my right."

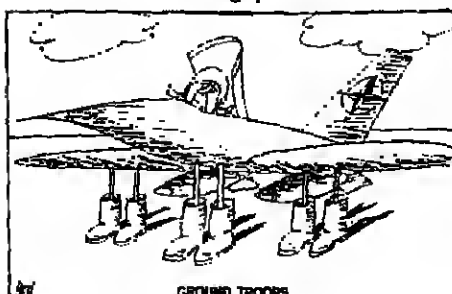
"There are three things in this world you can do nothing about: getting AIDS, getting clamped and running out of Chateau Lafite '45." Alan Clark, Tory MP

"We spend a lot of time praying for William Hague, and we sometimes pray for Tony Blair. We have to because he's the Prime Minister." Tim Montgomerie, Conservative Christian Fellowship

"Glamour is on a life-support machine and not expected to live." Joan Collins, actress

"Six of us collapsed on top of each other, with a rhinoceros at the bottom. To cap it all, I was overtaken by a Womble." Peregrine Armstrong-Jones, half-brother of Lord Snowdon, on his marathon

THE VIEWS OF THE WORLD

BALTIMORE SUN
USTHE STRAITS TIMES
SingaporeSUDEUTSCHE
ZEITUNG
Germany

MISCELLANEOUS

Stories from around the world

FAROE ISLAND REVIEW

YOUNG FAROESE women should refrain from eating whale-meat and blubber if they plan to have children, a team of Faroe researchers recommended recently. The amounts of PCB contained in whale-meat and, particularly, blubber has prompted the warning because women will pass the PCB on to their children during pregnancy. It is recommended not to eat whale-meat more than once or twice a month.

AL GOMHURIYA
Egypt

POLICE HAD their hands full trying to manage the chaos

caused by the introduction of hundreds of thousands of sheep into Egyptian households over the Eid. There was at least one ovine-related fatality - Ragab Mohammed Alam fell to his death pursuing a ram across a fourth-storey balcony on Saad Zaghloul street, in Giza (the sheep escaped but is presumed devoured).

In the Minya village of Al Ashraf Bafaa, a sheep belonging to one family burst into another family's home, triggering a knife fight that left four injured. And in south Cairo, a butcher and his two unemployed side-kicks were arrested for sheep-rustling - apparently, they managed to steal 12 unattended animals and EE100,000 worth of meat and sell it before they were caught.

RESEARCH BY SALLY CHATTERTON

Vive la France is not a trade fair, it's a way of life

IS FRANCE still top o' the nation? A survey in a New York newspaper a couple of years ago asked its readers to nominate the most civilised nation in terms of richness of culture, quality of life, history, geography and general overall ambience. France won, followed not very closely by Britain, with Italy coming in third. Civilisation, in this instance at least, was limited to Europe.

What fired most of those Americans to vote for France was its wine, its cuisine, its cathedrals and, above all, Paris, symbol of all things chic, stylish and desirable. Speaking for myself, the Is would have had it - Ireland, Italy and India, in no particular order - because all three countries have impressive top-nation qualities. Indian mythology is arguably

richer than Greek. Italian food is the most varied and the most delicious to be had, while Ireland has Yeats and Connemara and, above all, the Irish.

If quality of life means where you would get the most value from an hour chatting to the locals over a pint, Ireland would win hands down. The French would come nowhere - they never chat to foreigners, especially Americans.

Musing inconsequentially thus, I sat last Tuesday morning in a chic, stylish and eminently desirable drawing-room, one of many, in the French Ambassador's residence overlooking Kensington Gardens in London, waiting to be told by His Excellency why the French tourist board is hosting a three-day event called, daringly, "Vive la France", next January. I would have called

it a straightforward trade fair, but M. Bernard, the Ambassador, and all the other speakers after him - including Michael Heseltine, who revealed that he had a French grandmother - quickly disabused me of this entirely erroneous, not to say unglamorous, notion.

"Vive la France" was to be a celebration, a festival, a tribute to the French way of life for the benefit of all those British folk who appreciate what the French are so good at - food, wine, fashion, farm-house holidays, blockading Channel ports, etc. We were shown a video from which, to the liking accompaniment of "La Vie en Rose", we learnt that the promotion - sorry, celebration - was aimed at high spenders aged between 25 and 54 and that sponsors interested in



SUE ARNOLD
If quality of life means chatting to the locals over a pint, the French would get nowhere

taking stands or staging events should ring the following numbers. "We are bringing the soul of France to the heart of London."

said the last speaker, his voice breaking with emotion.

Afterwards, I made a beeline for a serious-looking, elegantly dressed young man who might easily have been curator of the Quai d'Orsay museum (someone said he was there). He turned out, in fact, to run a removals company that ships furniture to the Dordogne for English people who've bought second homes in France. When we ran out of things to say about moving small upright pianos and large Chesterfield sofas, he introduced me to an estate agent, a travel agent and a girl who works for Eurostar, who said no one called them trade fairs any more. Nowadays they are designed to be like sophisticated theme parks, which are there to compete with conventional tourist attractions.

"Not the Natural History Museum again, please Mum," cry your treasures. "It's so boring. Can't we go to the Scandinavian Fish and Knitwear exhibition at Olympia instead?" So off we go, and return four hours later laden with brochures for mail-order gravadlax and oiled wool and maybe a sample of rollmops in brine.

Now I come to think of it, I was once invited to a glittering evening at the Icelandic Embassy for just such a purpose. We ate herring served in 50 different ways, served by beautiful ice maidens modelling 50 varieties of Aran jersey. Every one smelt like sea lions.

"Trade fair", I admit, has an unpleasant commercial ring to it, but calling what is basically a shopping arcade a celebration, is going a bit far. The estate agent said, some-

what defensively, that shopping in France was an altogether different experience anyway. He's right there. Buy a perfectly ordinary apple pie in a boulangerie and they'll wrap it up for you like a wedding present.

It was at a trade fair that my ex-mother-in-law found one of my more memorable birthday presents. She is an enthusiastic fair-goer and inveterate bargain-hunter. On that occasion she combined both. At the Greetings Card, Novelties and Small Gifts exhibition, her eagle eye spotted a paperweight in the shape of the Eiffel Tower, reduced from £5 to £1 because it had only three legs. It was not a celebration of the French way of life, but all the same I liked it. It was different. *Vive la France!*

THE SATURDAY PROFILE

SONIA GANDHI, INDIAN POLITICIAN

The widow who would be queen

THIS WAS the week that Sonia Gandhi very nearly became India's new prime minister. Yesterday her scheme came unstuck, and the Congress, the party of which she is president, conceded that its attempt to glue together enough small parties to form a coalition had failed. But it was a close-run thing. And on the other side of the general election that now appears almost certain, it could well happen.

It was a tantalising moment: when the impossible absurdity that has menaced India for most of the Nineties almost came to pass; when the second largest nation in the world, whose modern history revolves around its struggle to shuck off foreign rule, nearly found itself governed once again by a foreigner.

Sonia Gandhi is not, legally speaking, Italian any more. She has Indian citizenship, though her detractors like to point out that she became an Indian only after her husband Rajiv became Prime Minister, when it was politically essential. She has lived in India for 30 years; she wears, in public at least, only saris and shalwar-kameez; she speaks Hindi, though opinions differ as to how fluent she is.

For educated Indians, however, all this is mere stage dressing, props to bamboozle the masses. Sonia Gandhi is as Italian as fettuccine, Prada or the Vatican. The notion of being ruled by her, for many Indians with some sense of national dignity and integrity, is deeply upsetting.

No one says this in public. Every nation has its properties and inhibitions. India's self-image, thanks to Mahatma Gandhi, is liberal through and through, and to voice something as crass as racial discrimination, even against a paleface, is not done. But they think it, and they say it among themselves, and to any foreigner curious enough to ask. In public all is smiling, vivaciousness, the head-wagging Indian gesture of cheerful assent. It is left to Bal Thackeray, quasi-Fascist leader of Bombay's Shiv Sena Party, to say on the record what is on everybody's mind. "If we must be ruled by foreigners again," he stormed during last year's general election, "let's invite the British back. At least they had 200 years' experience."

This week, Sonia Gandhi came close to pulling it off. The Congress Party - founded, as her supporters never fail to mention, by an Englishman - has the second largest number of seats in Lok Sabha (India's House of Commons). With the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) coalition felled by a single vote in last Saturday's vote of confidence, Congress stood again on the threshold of power. The party was united behind Sonia Gandhi. She has no parliamentary seat, but in the Indian system that was no obstacle. Within the statutory six months of attaining power, a safe seat would undoubtedly have been made available for her.

Sonia Gandhi, the widow of the one-time Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, is Congress's unquestioned leader because the

dynastic principle is the only principle that holds her party together. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, was followed (though not immediately) by his daughter Indira. (Her husband, Feroze Gandhi, had no connection to the Mahatma, but the name's resonance was undoubtedly useful.) Indira groomed her son Sanjay to take over; when he died in a flying accident she turned to his elder brother, Rajiv, a professional pilot and a most reluctant politician.

Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister when his mother was murdered by her bodyguard in 1984. And when Rajiv himself was blown up by an assassin in 1991, the party turned, with a sort of weary automatism, to his widow.

Sonia said no. If educated India confronts the likelihood of coming under the

corruption and haunted by failure. At independence, India was seen as the new Asian nation most likely to succeed. Forty years on it was a wounded giant, its vast potential still unfulfilled, while Japan and China - and even Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia - raced ahead. Congress, India's natural party of government, had to take the blame.

Yet more than failure, more than corruption, it was the lack of a dynastic heir that troubled Congress most deeply. So faction-ridden had the party become, that only a Gandhi could hold it together.

Installed in her guarded and heavily reinforced Lutyens bungalow at Number 10 Janpath, New Delhi, tending the Gandhi legacy, editing her mother-in-law's letters and her husband's photographs, Sonia Gandhi received an endless stream of Congress Party grandees imploring her to take command. She smiled and listened and sent them on their way.

Because while Jawaharlal Nehru (the son of an important figure in Congress) and Indira Gandhi and Sanjay and Rajiv were all, to a greater or lesser extent, groomed for power, reared with the smell of power in their nostrils, Sonia Gandhi's case was very different.

She was born Sonia Maino, the daughter of a small-time provincial builder in Orbassano near Turin, in 1946. She passed a provincial Italian childhood of blameless blankness. Then, at age 18, she went to Cambridge - not, as is often flatteringly written, to attend the university there, but to work as an au pair and study English as a foreign language.

Rajiv was studying mechanical engineering at Trinity College when they first met. She had no idea who he was; at the time she had only the vaguest idea about India, "with its snakes, elephants and jungles", she wrote. "Exactly where it was and what it was all about, I was not sure."

Overriding strong objections from her father, she followed Rajiv back to India, married him in a Hindu ceremony and, as Indira's trusted daughter-in-law, began her long apprenticeship in what it means to be a member of the all-powerful Nehru-Gandhi dynasty.

What it has meant for this European woman from a modest and conventional background is a life of terrifying excess: excess of fame and public exposure, excess of power, excess of adulation, excess of peril and suffering. It has meant an excess of all these things, not through deliberate choice and ambition but without choice, through a sort of karmic inevitability.

Her husband Rajiv had no hunger and little aptitude for politics; if his brother Sanjay had not killed himself performing a stupid stunt, he would have continued with the career he loved, as an airline pilot. Instead his brother died and the dreadful dynastic vortex sucked him into politics; and then his mother died and the same vortex sucked Rajiv into the highest office in the land.

LIFE STORY

Origins: born in 1946 in Orbassano, a small town outside Turin, daughter of a prosperous building contractor, Stefano Maino
Career: au pair at Cambridge from 1965; worked as a picture restorer and housewife during her marriage in Delhi. Following the deaths of her mother-in-law Indira and her husband Rajiv, she became



archivist-in-chief of the Gandhi dynasty
Nicknames: Madam, Mona Lisa, the Sphinx, the Enigma - all gathered during the years 1991-96 when she kept the Congress Party guessing about her intentions
She says: of her first meeting with Rajiv: "As our eyes met, I could feel my heart pounding. We greeted each other, and as far as I was concerned it was love at first sight"
Critics say: "Would Italy accept an Indian as prime minister?" Hindu nationalist politician Bal Thackeray

sway of an "Italian housewife" with serious misgivings, these are more than matched by those of the lady herself. After her husband Rajiv's death, the Congress Party, in a display of stunning arrogance and insensitivity, elected her president without taking her opinion on the matter. But she refused to toe the line: she rejected the office. Deprived of Gandhi's, and lacking any other effective glue, Congress flailed.

These were the years, the early Nineties, when Congress, which for most of the previous 40 years had ruled India (with brief interludes in opposition) as if by divine right, began to fall apart. It was riven by



Sonia Gandhi, after years of refusing to get involved, threw herself into leading Congress

Ajit Kumar

To her credit, Sonia Gandhi has never concealed her feelings about all this. She hated it, and she fought "like a tigress", as she said, to prevent it happening. But the vortex was too strong. When Indira Gandhi was shot by her bodyguard, Sonia was on the scene at once, cradling her mother-in-law's dying body. A mere seven years later, when Rajiv died, there was nobody to cradle: the Tamil Tiger suicide bomber's device had blown him to pieces.

Throughout the Nineties, Sonia Gandhi has resisted the vortex of Indian politics. She stayed in Delhi, a "sphinx", an "enigma" to the Indian journalists whose request for interviews she invariably turned down. She met everyone who mattered, domestically and internationally; a trip to 10 Janpath was on the itinerary of every visiting nabob. But she kept her own counsel. For Congress, consigned now to opposition, she became the great imponderable, the party's one hopeless hope.

Then, quite suddenly, in 1997 she changed her mind. She joined the party with which she was so closely identified. She made angry speeches, chastising government for the sluggishness of the inquiry into Rajiv's death. In December 1997 a general election was called, and after an agony of suspense Sonia Gandhi threw herself into the campaign.

The effect was electric. Congress immediately came back to life, and the BJP which had seemed to be heading for a famous victory, faltered. Sonia started her campaign at a place called Siprumbudur, the small town outside Madras where her husband had been murdered. Her delivery, in strongly accented English, was wooden, her response to the cheers of the crowd timid and hesitant. But the speech she gave hit all the right buttons: her husband's martyrdom, her widow's pain, her love and devotion to India.

It was intensely personal, but then the whole significance of her involvement in politics is indeed deeply personal. That is why she matters.

In the great Gandhi tradition, Sonia kept up a ferocious schedule of engagements during the election campaign, crisscrossing the vast country by car and helicopter, addressing millions of people. The result was not the return to power of which Congress had dreamed, but a convincing recovery. The rot had been stopped.

She has not wavered since. Last spring, she was unanimously elected party president. As such, she has quickly proved far more than a figurehead, getting closely involved in the selection of parliamentary candidates and hatching destructive parliamentary tactics.

The BJP responded by ignoring her as far as they could. But at the same time the Hindu nationalist right adopted a more oblique and sinister tactic: they persuaded their extremist allies, especially a group called Bajrang Dal, to launch unprovoked attacks on Christians in many different parts of India. In the worst case, in February, an Australian missionary and his two small sons were burned to death in their Jeep.

The Hindu nationalist high command will never accept responsibility for these assaults, but few doubt that they are ultimately to blame. The idea, it appears, was to goad Mrs Gandhi into standing up for the Christian victims, thus enabling her enemies to identify her with the weak and marginal Christian community, who constitute only about 5 per cent of India's population.

It was a dirty tactic, to which Sonia Gandhi responded with circumspection and cunning: by undertaking a pilgrimage to Hindu sacred sites. The war on Christians was a warning to Sonia of the crude attacks she must now learn to weather. This past week of high political drama in Delhi has been a second bloodbath. Now this improbable figure is truly braced for the battle to come.

PETER POPHAM

THE MOST potent icons of the cinema are those who made the shroud of dramatic career move of dying young - among them Marilyn Monroe and James Dean and, perhaps above all, Rudolf Valentino. The appearance of Valentino into old age, berto, who survived into old age, suggests that, had he lived, the Great Lover might have ended his days looking rather like Coronation Street's Albert Tatlock. As it was, Valentino's death in 1926 at the age of 31, from peritonitis brought on by a perforated ulcer, immortalised him as rakishly handsome.

To millions of American women Valentino was also a sexual predator, irresistibly selfish and dominating. But he was not much like his screen alter ego. In reality he was

gentle and weak-willed, possibly bisexual, and certainly dominated by his second wife Natacha Rambova (whose real name was the marginally less exotic Winifred Hudnut).

Valentino's real name was Rodolfo Guglielmi, and although the myth persists that his family were illiterate Italian peasants, the more prosaic truth is that they were middle class; his father was a veterinary surgeon. Nevertheless, Rodolfo emigrated to America when he was 18, and worked as a night-club dancer in New York. Here he became embroiled in the scandalous De Saules case, which erupted when a celebrated society beauty shot her estranged husband. Sensibly, he then moved to Hollywood, changed his name, and landed some



BRIAN VINER'S ICONS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

RUDOLPH VALENTINO, FILM STAR

minor film roles, before his powerful performance in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921) turned him into a star to rival the arch-swagger Douglas Fairbanks.

Valentino's rolling eyes and quivering nostrils, which rolled and quivered even more spectacularly in his second major film, *The Sheik* (also 1921), look absurd by today's standards of acting. But he took America - and, in particular, Amer-

ican women - by storm. *The Sheik*, though an inferior film to *Four Horsemen*, was a box-office sensation, and "Sheik-mania" swept the country, inspiring the hit song "The Sheik of Araby", and even influencing interior design.

Men, meanwhile, were less enamoured of Valentino. They didn't mind their wives and girlfriends falling for the all-American Fairbanks, but Valentino, darn it, was a

foreigner. When powder-dispensing machines started appearing in men's washrooms, the blame fell squarely on Valentino, who was promptly nicknamed "The Pink Powder Puff" and felt obliged to defend his reputation by staging an exhibition boxing match refereed by Jack Dempsey. But criticism of him gathered ferocity. "Why didn't someone quietly drown Rudolf Guglielmi, alias Valentino, years ago?" wondered the *Chicago Tribune*.

By the mid-Twenties, Valentino's career, like his marriage to Rambova, was on the rocks. But cynical sequels are by no means a modern phenomenon, and the success of *The Son of the Sheik* (1926) revived some of his flagging appeal. It took his death, however, to restore the

star to the heights of his former popularity. And then some. The death of Valentino made headlines all over the world, and the mass hysteria at his funeral was crowned by the melodramatic performance of his lover, the actress Pola Negri, whose convulsions of grief would not have disgraced *The Sheik*.

Behind the anguish, there seems little doubt that Negri spotted a great PR opportunity. She asked for Valentino's coffin to be covered with a blanket of white roses, with red roses in the centre spelling out the name POLA in foot-high letters. To her barely concealed fury, the funeral organisers refused. And so she had to settle for collapsing in what appeared to be a dead faint as Rudolf Valentino, icon, was laid to rest.



WITNESS
THE ENGLISH IN SCOTLANDCrossing the
borderline

WERE IN Smithie's pub, in Edinburgh's elegant Georgian New Town, watching Manchester United beat Juventus. The beers are unfamiliar - Deuchars, Caledonian and McEwan's 80/-.

Not a pint of Speckled Hen to be had. But around the table everyone is English. There is even a motif of St George's flag on a mirror nearby, albeit alongside the blue of the St Andrew's flag.

Suddenly, Dwight Yorke breaks through, weaving towards goal only to be felled by the 'keeper before Andy Cole scores United's winner. Everyone, Scots and English alike, rises and roars with delight. We're all on the same side to cheer Alex Ferguson, Scotland's greatest football brain, lead England's greatest club to European success.

But Justin Woodroffe, educated at Westminster public school and an émigré from a smart home in Chelsea, is recalling last year's World Cup, when the English gathered at Smithie's to cheer Glenn Hoddle's men. "I remember being on the train to London during the England-Colombia match," says Justin, just 21 but with a cut-glass accent apparently modified by ancestral indulgence in fine port and cigars. "I had a mini TV with me and all the Scots were cheering the opposition. But when we reached London, I shook hands with them and there were no hard feelings."

It was a charitable reaction. But others may easily feel, given the rise of Scottish nationalism, that life north of the Border is less welcoming than in the days before Mel Gibson took to the kit and whooped the English in *Braveheart*. I want to find out if the Anglos feel threatened.

The first problem is finding the Anglos. It is very easy to insult someone who may sound as though he was raised somewhere near Buckingham Palace, but quickly protests that he is broad Scottish and can trace his ancestors back to the Battle of Bannockburn. For example, Magnus Linklater, chair of the Scottish Arts Council and son of Eric Linklater from Orkney, would certainly consider himself Scottish. But Eton took its toll: "I find that the occasional Glasgow taxi driver and people I don't know from Adam ask me when I am going back, or have I been here long."

Having sorted the posh Scots from the Anglos, the next step is to discover where they congregate. The Anglos do not have an expat network; they like to muck in with what the Scots do. (Justin has even sampled a deep-fried Mars bar.) Unlike Ireland and post-colonial societies such as Zimbabwe (where the Anglo-Irish and the old Rhodesians make sure their farms back on to one another and where each community likes to pray and party together), here the Anglos melt in. But if you want to flush them out in one spot, football is the key.

My friends watching United in Smithie's definitely are English. And they are used to questions about fitting in during an upsurge of Scottish nationalism. "Every time I phone home they mention it," says Justin, who works for an upmarket letting agent in Edinburgh. "They feel strongly that Scotland is being taken away from them. They can't see the good side of what is happening. My brother thinks Scotland is breaking up the Crown."

Others around the table nod in agreement, drinking whiskeys and vodka (no one touches the beer). So what are the benefits? Jane Rodger launches forth enthusiastically. Aged 35 now, she left London five years ago to become head of department at a bank in Edinburgh. She talks about her Scottish friends, about how Scottishness is inclusive. "I feel I'm a part of it all. I'll go along to a ceilidh and feel welcome." "You're right," says Justin. "They come and take your hand and whisk you off."

For someone like Jane, genteelly middle-class, Scottishness does not mean anti-English, it means feeling comfortable, finding something that perhaps got lost in her stressful yuppie life back in London. "Coming to Scotland is like being in England 20 years ago in terms of values and courtesy. People say 'thank you' when they get off the bus. They are polite on the telephone. A feature of city life in London is that you frequently feel isolated. Here there is more community."

Jane is typical of many English enthusiasts living in Scotland. They are here seeking out something. You will find them up in the Highlands sending their children to schools where they will learn Gaelic.

Typically, the English are moderate Scottish nationalists: in the 1992 election almost as large a proportion of them backed the SNP as was the case among native Scots. The Anglos are usually pro-Scottish parliament, but against independence. Separation would be a step too far, cutting them off from their roots, while the parliament makes the place they have come to more important, less provincial.



Justin Woodroffe, right, and Edouard Seblino in the Smithie's pub in Edinburgh

David Rose

Edouard Seblino, 21, an urbane history of art student at Edinburgh University, sips on his whisky. He doubts that nationalism has a hard edge. "My great-aunt," says Edouard, son of a Kent insurance broker, "has lived here for more than 65 years and of course she has an English accent."

"She says that she has seen the change in national feeling very recently. I feel it is contrived because it helps sell newspapers and suits some politicians. I don't feel it is deep-seated."

I suspect that the English here do not feel threatened by nationalism, because it is anti-metropolitan more than it is anti-English. When the SNP leader Alex Salmond stirs up feeling against "London Labour", his words are reminiscent of William Cobbett's rantings in the 1820s against the

English capital, which he considered a tumour and called the "Great Wen". "These are sentiments," says Christopher Harvie, author of the recent study, *Scotland and Nationalism*, "which you are just as likely to hear in Hull or Newcastle."

There is, of course, violence against the English. There are occasional stories along the lines of "my daughter was spat on in the playground because she was English", which the London press leaps on. But one suspects that these stories are often over-simplifications, where nationality has become conflated with other disputes.

Listening to Justin and Edouard, it is clear that alcohol plays a big role in English-Scottish conflicts, which sound very like the town vs gown battles found in university towns such as Oxford and Cambridge. As

Christopher Harvie says: "The 'Yah' factor is important. If you go into a pub and shout across the bar, 'Hiary, are we going up to your Daddy's place in Cromarty for the ball?', the wee Marys tend to get a little upset."

Justin and Edouard, each of whom has lived in Scotland for several years, are - like most young people who have encountered public violence - acutely aware of where the fault line runs between the Scots and the English.

"I realised on New Year's Eve up here," says Justin. "I was with my best friend, who is Scottish, and there were 200,000 people on Princes Street singing *Flower of Scotland*. I said, 'Hey, this is a bit nationalistic', and my friend gave me a stare which said, 'Don't mess'. With that harsh glance, someone who had

been a close friend for four years let me know where the borderline is." How far then, I ask, could the Scots go in their nationalism before my drinking partners felt threatened? Justin orders another vodka and tells a story.

"I was in this pub watching a match with a load of English people, and these five Scots came in making a real nuisance of themselves, shouting about the English. They were even pulling at the girls' hair. And people just let them get on with it. It was only when they picked on a black bloke and called him a nigger that everyone got upset and we got angry with them."

"That was a real eye-opener. It was when it stopped being patriotic and became racist that we wouldn't put up with it any longer."

JACK O'SULLIVAN

THE WEEKLY MUSE

BY MARTIN NEWELL



A hailstorm hits the terrace
To warn that summer's coming
And rattles on the skylights
A syncopated drumming
As glistening in the gutters
The hailstones fuse together
The Devil's own confetti
At the marriage of the weather

The sixth of May approaches
And the politicians wait
While the dog of devolution
Gnaws the ancient bones of state
As a ghostly Roman soldier
Who is haunting Hadrian's Wall
On a wet and windy evening
Hears a Pictish warrior call:
"So Gordon Brown has done it
Stemmed SNP advances
But six Scots in the Cabinet?
He couldn't take the chances
Tough miracles allowing
If Labour seats should fall
The way the mood's been lately
We might rebuild yon wall."
"A good idea," the Roman said
"With rising tax no doubt
You'd need to keep your people in
More than to keep us out."

With dentists on the NHS
More rare than dung of rocking-horse
Britannia's teeth are in a mess
No prize for guessing why of course
Or when it was the rot set in
Or who was in the driver's seat
And sacrificed free dental care
To hoast a better balance sheet.

But nice to hear Rab Butler's thoughts
Endorsed, if not exhumed, of late
As Peter Lilley praised in speech
The virtues of the welfare state
And pledge of funds to keep it safe
For people of the poorer sort.
Let's have a clack of blackened teeth
And demonstrate our full support:

So fiddle on, Dave Swarbrick
Though poorly, not deceased
Who found his own obituary
Was premature at least.
But most musicians know this
Although it goes unsaid:
Miss two nights in the laproom
Your mates all think you're dead.

THE WEASEL

Pictures at an exhibition evoke memories of a Sixties few people saw,
while the stars come under scrutiny in a trip to Broadcasting House

DIAMOND GEEZERS, Ronnie and Reggie. Anyone out east will tell you that. They'd do anything for you, especially if it involved dislocating your jaw or breaking your leg in a couple of places. Nothing was too much trouble. If need be, they'd even do you in entirely. They were real toffs.

These happy memories came flooding back at the Barbican the other day when I saw the new David Bailey exhibition. The very first snap is a handsome likeness of the twins, looking sharp in some classy threads, accompanied by their pet snakes, Gerrard and Nipper. People often ask me how you could tell them apart. Simple. The snakes are the ones with the warmer eyes.

Not that I ever had the pleasure of meeting R and R myself. But, about a quarter of a century ago, I once worked for a publisher on a book of Bailey's photographs. No, I didn't actually meet him either, if you must know. But I was given a signed print as a souvenir. It's a moody landscape, only slightly marred because someone smudged the signature with a wet finger to find out whether it was real. On these slender grounds, I see myself as something of an authority on the great lensman.

Entitled *Birth of the Cool* - a title borrowed from an album by Miles Davis, who also appears in one of the photographs - the Barbican show is mainly devoted to Bailey's work in the Sixties. Like lots of other people, I seem to have missed out on the more celebrated aspects of that decade. Who was it who said that their Sixties consisted of standing around in a car park, waiting for the rain to stop? I'm sorry to say that I never glimpsed Moët et Chandon with Penelope Tree or strolled with the Rolling Stones at Avebury (the ludicrous green shades worn by Keith Richards slightly detract from the mystic nature of the scene). My Sixties were more like the dingy East End shop-fronts photographed by Bailey, which could have come straight out of *Dombey & Son*. (One establishment boasts of its speciality in "Surgical Boot Repairs", which might have come in handy after a meeting with Ron and Reg.)

In his Harry Palmer persona, a Disque Bleu dangling from his lips, Michael Caine looks the epitome of Sixties cool, which is more than can be said for David Puttnam. Leaping zaniely in 1965, he is a spit for Gerry of the Pacemakers.

One wall of the show contrasts portraits from that era with more recent studies. Ollie Reed looks absurd yet dangerous in 1965, while Noel and Liam look plain absurd in 1995.



Naomi Campbell is rather impressive decked out as Josephine Baker in 1960, but P J Proby is somewhat less convincing in a Christ-like pose from 1965.

But the undisputed star of the show is Jean Shrimpton. Has ever a model drawn better work from a photographer, or vice versa? Whether clad in a battered trenchcoat at Tower Bridge or smiling gorgeously on a tropical beach, her hair still wet from the sea, she is incomparable. In 1964, she even managed to look magnificent beside Hank B Marvin. (At the time, the strummer was essaying a goatee beard along with his trademark horn-rims, a combination that became fashionable only 35 years later.)

Though Bailey never saw fit to photograph the adolescent Weasel in close proximity to the Shrimp, I may have had a fleeting encounter with her in later years. Sensibly ditching the world of fashion, she became a successful hotelier in Pen-

zance. A couple of years ago, I had to pass the night in this Cornish resort and made my way to what I thought was her establishment. A striking-looking woman behind the counter apologised and said they were full up. Just like the Sixties all over again.

BRIEFLY DISCARDING his fur mask, the Weasel makes his radio debut next week as a contributor to a series of 15-minute programmes called *Naming the Universe* (Radio 4, Monday-Friday, 3.30pm). I wouldn't be so vain as to mention it, except for the strange experience of my first-ever visit to Broadcasting House (or BH, as we old pros call it) where I was interviewed "down the line" from Glasgow.

This is what happens. After you enter under Epstein's notorious sculpture of an anatomically correct Ariel, a security guard gives you directions on a slip of paper. These are

a bit like the instructions on a treasure map, but instead of taking "12 steps to the north, then 30 to north-east", you pass through a long white corridor which echoes to the Smashy and Nicey gibberings of daytime Radio 2, then you go up an escalator, down one floor in a lift, and along a corridor to a locked door where you pick up a phone to gain admittance. A young bloke directs you to a "self-operating studio", in fact a claustrophobic cubicle containing little more than chair, table, microphone and earphones.

Except that my studio was already occupied. An old geezer had obviously set up shop for the day in there, with books and papers scattered over every surface. He was not best pleased at being disturbed. "Are you in here? What, now?" With some reluctance, he gathered up his library into several plastic bags and lurched out. In the midst of the kerfuffle, he knocked the earphones on to the floor and I promptly trod on them. The device was in several bits when I picked it up. A wee Scottish voice was tweeting from the earpieces: "Hello, Mr Weasel. Are you there?"

I imagine the completed programme will omit the grunting and cursing that accompanied my on-the-spot repairs to the head-set, but I doubt if the producers will be able to transmit my panting contribution into the soigné delivery of an Alvar Liddell. One final point may be puzzling you, as it has puzzled most of my friends. Viz: what the blue blazes is the Weasel doing on a programme about astronomical nomenclature? Regular readers of this column may recall my delighted discovery that on Venus there are places called Christie (after Agatha) and Sayers (after Dorothy L). Mystery solved.

THE CENTENARY of the birth of Noël Coward has prompted the publication of his revues of the Twenties, such as *On With the Dance and Sing No More*. "A sketch for a revue must be sharp, funny and to the point, with a good, really good black-out line," insisted the Master. "Whether the performers are naked or wearing crinolines is beside the point; the same rule applies."

I'm pleased to see that the art of the revue is still alive and well at the Albany Theatre in Deptford. Admittedly the treats on offer which include "local legend" Rubber Johnny and "Lewisham-based freakshow" Shagnasty, do not sound much like Sir Noël's blithe triumphs. But, as long as they have a really good black-out line, I'm sure he would approve.

DAYS LIKE THESE

24 APRIL 1949

JULIEN GREEN
American writer living in Paris,
notes in his diary:

"Read the Introduction to *Kierkegaard* by Jolivet. Few books have upset me so much since I came into this world. It is horrifying at times to discover oneself in another man, and this happened to me when I read this book. But isn't it the role of very great men to reveal us to ourselves? I mean that they teach us what we knew without knowing that we knew it. In this sense, Kierkegaard's sentences are like so many magic mirrors where the soul is reflected and sees itself for the first time."



26 APRIL 1915

WNP BARRELLION,
naturalist and writer, notes in his journal:

"In the spirit of pious resignation Thomas à Kempis wrote: 'Meddle not with things that be too high for thee, but study such things as yield compunction to the heart rather than elevation to the head.' I like to put alongside this the delightful passage from Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio*: 'I love to lose myself in a mystery, to pursue my reason to an O altitudo! This solitary recreation to pose my apprehension with those involved enigmas and riddle of the Trinity, Incarnation and Resurrection.' Recreation is great!

"I have always meddled with things that are too high for me, my first adventure being Berkeley at the age of 15, a philosopher who captured my amazement over a period of many months. Like a little London gamia, I run about the great city of the mind and hang on behind the big motor lorries of thought. Looked at from the point of view of multiplicity, duration disintegrates into a powder of moments, none of which endures, each being an instantaneity. No matter if I do not understand Bergson: in a sentence like that I catch at least the rumour of some tremendous thought. It is like putting one's ear to a telegraph pole on top of a wind-swept heath..."

26 APRIL 1972

NED ROREM,
composer, writes in his journal:

"It is important to be alive. For every Sylvia Plath who made a living out of dying, 20 good poets' credit is cancelled by death. Death does not reduce a painter's cachet, since his work is an investment; but an original manuscript by a Plath isn't 'worth' anything. No sooner does an artist die than his work locates itself, becomes less urgent, asks to be balanced and judged."

IAN IRVINE

THE SATURDAY ESSAY

It is 50 years old, but what has Nato got to celebrate?



MICHAEL HOWARD

The idea of dismantling the Western alliance has been raised, usually on the other side of the Atlantic

THIS MONTH Nato celebrates its golden anniversary, but the weekend's celebrations in Washington are unlikely to be so cheerful as those held in London a few weeks ago. A month is a long time in politics, especially if war happens to have broken out in the meantime.

So, far from being an exercise in self-congratulation, the meeting is more likely to be a worried council of war – a kind of war that the Alliance has never fought, and was never intended to fight.

Nato still has much to congratulate itself about. It can rightly claim to have fulfilled all its original aims, which were well defined by its first Secretary-General, Lord Ismay, as being to keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down. The Americans became deeply committed to the defence of Western Europe against what was perceived, rightly or wrongly, as a Soviet threat of military conquest. The Federal Republic of Germany was peacefully absorbed into a Western Europe whose unity its leaders played a major role in creating. Whether the Soviet threat was exaggerated or not, American protection enabled Western Europe to recover its nerve politically and to create an economy wealthy beyond any historical precedent. The price paid was the abandonment of Central and Eastern Europe to Soviet control; but, even there, the stability created by the Iron Curtain was preferable to a third World War.

Now the Cold War is over, and Nato can take much of the credit; not just for keeping it cold, but for bringing it to an end at the earliest possible moment with a remarkable absence of bitterness on either side. "The German Problem" is now history. The Soviet Union no longer exists. For the past 10 years, therefore, the Allies have been debating how to reconstruct the Alliance to meet an entirely new situation.

The idea of dismantling Nato altogether has occasionally been raised, usually on the other side of the Atlantic, but never taken seriously. Nato is not just a military alliance; it is an institution, with a large military and civil bureaucracy whose members have a vested interest in its survival. The armed forces of the smaller European powers make no sense except within the Alliance framework, while the Germans still see the Alliance as a necessary legitimisation of their own military power. Most of them would agree that the renationalisation of European armed forces would be a foolish, if not dangerous, retrograde step; Nato provides for Europeans a "security community" that guarantees them against threats not only from outside but also from one another. Also, it does so on the cheap: the Americans still provide all the expensive hardware and infrastructure, the cost of which would severely erode even the wealthiest European economy.

The American interest in Nato is more subtle. The United States still feels itself deeply committed to the preservation of world order. Its enemies may see this order as a hegemony based on economic motives; its friends share the belief that it is a genuine and admirable moral commitment; but in any case it is a burden that the Americans are reluctant to carry on their own. They need to believe that when they do intervene to protect or restore that order, they are doing so on behalf of the "international community".

Initially, they hoped that this community



Harry Truman, US President, signing the ratification of the North Atlantic pact at the White House in Washington in July 1949

might be embodied in the United Nations. For a few golden years at the end of the Cold War, when the Russians were compliant supplicants if not partners for the United States, and the Chinese were post-Tiananmen pariahs, perhaps it really was. But this is no longer the case; the UN is seen as being too divided in its councils to provide a supportive consensus for American policy. Now the "international community" is, for the United States, its like-minded partners in Nato, whose cooperation it seeks in order to legitimise its actions. For Washington the military importance of Nato may have dwindled with the end of the Cold War, but the political significance of the Alliance is greater than ever. In consequence the Americans, so far from wishing to wind up Nato, have sought to expand both its membership and its field of action beyond the strict defensive limits of Europe and North America that are laid down in the text of the treaty. "Out of area," as one American congressman brutally put it, "or out of business".

Throughout the first 50 years of its existence, the members of the Alliance quarrelled bitterly over two major issues: the requirements of nuclear deterrence and the desirability of political détente. The literature dealing with these subjects was as voluminous, and is now as irrelevant, as theological tomes debating the Real Presence. Recently Nato has been wrestling with three very different problems: the expansion of membership; the assumption of responsibilities "out of area"; and the development within the Alliance of a distinct European element, a "European Security and Defence Identity", to match the growing political and economic unity of the continent. So the Allies had plenty on their minds even before they became involved in the third Balkan war.

Let us take the last issue first. In principle, the Americans have been supportive of a distinctive European contribution to the Alliance. Ever since the days of John F Kennedy they have been urging the Europeans to combine so as to take their fair share of the burden of their own defence, and to create a "second pillar" for Nato. More recently they have seen the additional advantage of a European force that might be used in situations where domestic

public opinion would not permit the commitment of US troops, but for which the US might provide the necessary logistical support. Among Europeans, the French have been most eager to see this develop: a separate command of this kind would provide them with the opportunity to exert military leadership in Europe and counter-balance the Anglo-Saxon dominance they so much resent. The Maastricht Treaty, with its commitment to a common European defence and foreign policy, provided the catalyst for a renewed initiative, but one which both the Americans and the British have regarded with deep suspicion. So for a decade the Allies have been wrangling over the possibility of creating what they term "combined joint task forces", which would be "separable but not separate" (an endlessly repeated mantra), producing mountains of paper, clouds of new acronyms, and a general atmosphere in Brussels of cynical confusion. Recently Mr Blair has tried to show what a good European he is by sinking his differences with the French, but "the European defence identity" remains a concept that has yet to be clothed with flesh.

Secondly there is Nato expansion – an issue over which the Alliance is still deeply divided, though not on national lines. On the one side are those who see Nato primarily as a mutually supportive alliance of democracies to which any like-minded state is entitled to belong, especially those who suffered for so long under Soviet oppression. On the other are those concerned with the military and political effectiveness of an Alliance that can barely function with 16 members, and for whom More will inevitably mean Worse. They are joined by *Realpolitik*ers for whom good relations with Russia take precedence over sentimental feelings towards small states in Central Europe who are more likely to prove military liabilities rather than assets, and in any case have nowhere else to go.

The decision to admit Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic was taken in Washington largely in response to ethnic domestic pressures, and on the urging of a Czech-born Secretary of State. These three states can certainly claim to have been arbitrarily separated from a West to which they culturally belong, but their ad-

mission opens a Pandora's box, especially since it has been officially declared that they will not be the last. Who next? Hungary's admission makes little strategic sense unless it is joined by its neighbour Slovenia. The French will not rest content without the admission of their traditional ally Romania, and can Bulgaria then be left isolated between Romania and Turkey? And what about the Baltic states – the only ones who might still need protection against the Russians? For the unfortunate military staffs whose task it is to integrate the wildly differing armed forces of these countries into the Alliance's structure and plan their integrated defence, the prospect is a nightmare.

If it could be accepted that the collapse of the Soviet Union implies that Nato need no longer be regarded as a serious military alliance, but simply as a "security community" of friendly and like-minded nations, a sort of inner circle of the Partnership for Peace, then no problem arises. Membership could then be mended almost indefinitely, and the sword could be beaten, if not into ploughshares, then into bayonets for purely ceremonial use. But that is not the way the United States sees it, which brings us to the final problem: "Out of Area".

"More means Worse" not just for military planners but also for political decision-makers. Even over issues narrowly concerned with area defence, it has always been a herculean task to get agreement between Copenhagen, Lisbon, Rome, Oslo, Paris, London and Washington, not to mention Athens and Ankara. To toss Warsaw, Prague, Budapest, Bucharest and possibly Vilnius into this cauldron can result only in political boil-and-bubble with a minimum of positive result. Any suggestion of supporting United States intervention anywhere outside the European area, unless it bears the imprimatur of the United Nations or directly threatens common European interests, is likely to provoke strong domestic dissent in every member of the Alliance. The more widely membership of the Alliance is extended, the more likely this is to be the case.

The exception, of course, is the Balkans – that squalling fosterchild deposited on the lap of the European Powers by the dying

Ottoman Empire a century and a half ago. The Balkans are hardly "out of area" for Greece, Turkey or Hungary, and would not be for Slovenia, Bulgaria or Romania were they to join. The region has always played a large if unwelcome role in the foreign policies of France, Britain and Italy, it is of special interest to Russia, and in consequence to *Realpolitik*ers in the United States. Nato has, in fact, inherited the mantle of the European Powers which repeatedly found themselves compelled collectively to intervene in the region between 1875 and 1914, when their involvement escalated into a global conflict whose consequences pushed the region on to the back-burner for the rest of the century.

Now it is back on the agenda. The European members of the Alliance are involved, not as loyal allies supporting and legitimising an American-inspired intervention, but as the legates of the old Concert of Europe and thus principal actors in their own right. The United States is involved, not just to pull European chestnuts out of the fire for them, but also in a moral crusade against evil – and this is a point as constantly and skilfully made to them by the British Prime Minister today as it was 60 years ago – of the kind that they believed they were waging in both World Wars. Suddenly the Alliance has found a purpose to justify its existence to the most sceptical of its critics.

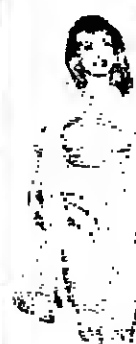
It is still far too soon to pronounce judgement on the effectiveness of Nato intervention in Kosovo and its consequences for the Alliance. Nato will probably "win", but it could be at a cost that so embitters relations between the Allies as to make future co-operation almost impossible. More probably the difficulties and hazards of the operation will draw them closer together. But almost certainly the result will be a lasting commitment to policing the region, of a kind that the Powers before 1914 did their very best to avoid.

The Balkans may or may not be "out of area", but either way they are likely to keep the Alliance "in business" for a very long time to come.

The author was Regius Professor of modern history at Oxford University from 1980 to 1989

BAROMETER

SEAN O'GRADY



Fantastic
Welcome to the Leaders' Wives section of *The Independent*. Fionn Hague wore this sari-style dress to a do for Asian businessmen. The striking outfit was made from exquisite turquoise silk, cost £400 and was the work of the talented young designer Raishma Islam. But this didn't stop it – and Fionn – getting mixed press reviews along the lines of "unflattering fashion fiasco". Time to turn the tide. The Fionn Fian Federation (Unofficial) is now open, membership is free, and you don't have to be a Conservative, or even like her bubby much, to join. Contact: s.ogradys@independent.co.uk or 0171-293 2032. Fionn fights back.

Nice Neanderthals

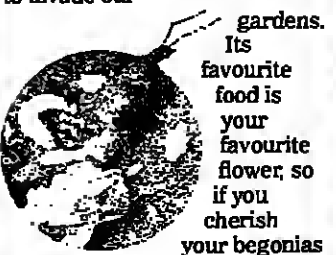
It may be a popular term of abuse, but "Neanderthal" derives, of course, from the type of primitive hominid whose remains were first discovered in the Neander valley, Germany, in 1856. Ever since, we've thought that the Neanderthals were unrelated to us humans. But just look at this reconstruction



of Neanderthal domesticity provided by the Natural History Museum. Flintstones-like, the scene has much resonance for *Homo sapiens*, with its quarrelling juveniles and Mr Neanderthal's garment of choice, a tasselled suede jacket. Unprepossessing they may seem, but Mr and Mrs Neanderthal obviously had more sex appeal than we have given them credit for. Archaeologists have just discovered a "missing link" that suggests that when Cro-Magnon early men met the Neanderthals in what is now Spain, they did not, as previously thought, just wipe them out, but instead got down to making whoopee and hybrid babies. So just remember: there's a little bit of Neanderthal in all of us.

Evil weevil

The vine weevil, a real-life millennium bug, is thriving as never before and is about to invade our



gardens. Its favourite food is your favourite flower, so if you cherish your begonias and rhododendrons you'll choose the lesser of two evils and consult the Vine Weevil Advice Centre: www.vine.weevil.org.uk

Image of the week

A majestic portrait by Andrew Buurman, of Sylvester the guana, a miniature Godzilla dumped in a field of sheep and rescued by the wonderful and dedicated RSPCA.



MY WEEK

HUGH C RAE, ROMANTIC NOVELIST, WHO WRITES AS JESSICA STIRLING



Rae in his lair James Stewart

Sunday
I'm desperate to finish editing part one of my new novel, the third part of *The Strawberry Season* trilogy. In the afternoon I play tennis at my local club in Kilmarnock but have to quit owing to bad knees. I'm 63 but my knees feel a lot older. I come home and worry about my nomination for the Parker Romantic Novel of the Year award. I get a couple of phone calls from reporters and go to bed early, at 1.30am.

Monday
Decide, with nothing on the calendar, to make a flying start on part two of the book. Just about rolling when the phone rings. It's BBC TV Scotland – they want to come and photograph a writer in his lair. Nobody ever comes to this scruffy

bile hazard. I'm a heavy smoker: no other human has been in my study for 20 years. But they duly arrive and insist on coming in. It obviously appeals them: the reporter conducts the interview from behind his hand to avoid the smell. The item is for the end of the Scottish News. I phone all surviving relatives so they don't miss my moment of glory.

I continue to worry about the awards. I don't sleep well, but blame my knees not my nervous system.

Tuesday
Catch the train from Glasgow to London. I am staying at a hotel in Euston. Go to see *An Ideal Husband* with a friend: it is quite relaxing. Talking to another writer helps me calm down. We go for an Italian in Leicester Square. I return to my

hotel and call my dearly beloved wife, Liz. After a chat I worry about not getting enough sleep. I read Peter Ackroyd's biography of Thomas More. He's lucky not to have been nominated for the award. Martyrdom looks easy by comparison.

Wednesday
Get up, have breakfast and put on the dreaded blue suit worn only for other people's funerals. I'm doing an interview for Radio 5 Live: John Humphrys is the presenter. I've

done quite a lot of radio in Scotland and feel confident. Although in Scotland the BBC stick you in a closet, here the mere cleanliness of the studio makes me feel important. I'm taken to meet the seven other short-listed writers for a photo shoot. I am the only man – the token doddery male grump. Someone produces a red rose and wants me to put it between my teeth, the height of banality and a line I decide not to cross. More photos in front of Eros in

Piccadilly Circus. I manage to smoke about six fags undetected. Passers-by regard us with mild curiosity: obviously too old for models, maybe a terrorist group? At the lunch, Derek Parker announces the winner, a young girl called Claire. It's only her third novel. I feel a sense of relief. My only disappointment is not winning the five grand. I've never been interested in fame and glory.

I have a couple of glasses of red wine and chew the fat with some friends. I call my wife to check she has recorded *ER*. She is mildly disappointed by the results. She enjoyed my crime novels more and is quite sorry that I gave them up. Unfortunately, romantic novels make more money and Jessica has remained steady for years.

Thursday
Buy two bags of Thorntons chocolates, a romantic gesture of a practical nature, and the papers. None carries any news of the awards. Thank God I'm back to work tomorrow. I read the papers, drink coffee and smoke several packets of cigarettes on the train. At home I check no one has stolen the squirrels from the garden. Unfortunately not, I watch *ER* and unplug the phone.

Friday
Look at part two of my novel. I am feeling rather optimistic as I pick up the 1889 copy of *The Forester* for my research. It's been a hectic, worrying week. I have enjoyed myself, though I would probably have had more fun if I hadn't been nominated. INTERVIEW BY DAISY PRICE

Regina Gillinson-Schein

THE CELLIST Regina Gillinson-Schein would seem to hold the record for ubiquity in a profession where ubiquity is for most a way of life. She was a fine musician who played under many great conductors and partnered some of the most accomplished musicians of her time, while her adventures and romances read like a novel.

She was born Regina Schein in 1908 in Zurich into a family of Russian Jewish musicians and watchmakers who had settled in Switzerland after escaping from the ghetto in Ekaterinoslav in Russia. She began her studies on the piano but when her teacher hit her knuckles with a ruler she retaliated, thereby terminating all prospects of a career as a pianist.

At 11, "Weckl", as she was known, took lessons on the cello from the celebrated cellist and musicologist Joachim Stutchewsky, and made such phenomenal progress that by the time she was 14 she and her pianist sister Gilla both went straight from school each day to play in their father's band at the silent cinema.

At 21 she married Joseph Feldman, whose business interests were in China. On arrival in Shanghai she discovered that Feldman's friends and relatives spoke only Russian or English. She spoke neither, but within two months taught herself basic Russian by reading the classics and looking up every word in the dictionary.

She continued to play the cello and soon achieved a following on the concert platform. When offered a teaching job at the Manila Academy in the Philippines, she accepted despite the fact that she knew nothing about teaching and spoke no English (the academy's official language). She wrote to Stutchewsky for advice and he sent her a long letter outlining the main principles of teaching; she also set about learning English.

Her husband joined her and for the next four years Regina taught cello and built up a highly successful performing career. But by 1935 the marriage was over and she returned to Europe and continued her studies with Stutchewsky. Within six months she had established a major solo career and become known throughout Europe, one of the highlights being a performance of the Dvorak Concerto in Prague under Rafael Kubelík and the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra.

In 1938 she and Stutchewsky married in Switzerland. This coincided with the Nazi invasion of Austria and

'When, aged nearly 90, she fractured her arm, she simply started working on the piano until she could lift her bow and play her cello again'

Stutchewsky, an ardent Zionist, felt they should go to Palestine. For the next two years Regina continued her career in her adopted country, achieving success in cities, villages and kibbutzim alike. She became captivated by the idealism, energy and commitment of the people there, acquiring a vivid sense of Jewish history and a pride in her own Jewish roots.

There were dangers too: in 1940 the Stutchewskys just missed being killed when the Italians bombed Tel Aviv. Regina was injured and her cello smashed to pieces. She borrowed a cello and continued to perform, undaunted by the dangers but inspired by the passion of the audi-

ences. However, the marriage began to flounder and she and her husband agreed to divorce.

None the less her performing career continued to flourish in Palestine, and it was on a concert tour of the Middle East that she met Stanley Gillinson, on leave from the British Army in India, whom she married in Jaffa in 1945. Once again her nomadic existence survived postings from Cairo to Bangladesh and she continued her career, pausing only to give birth to their two children, Clive and Sandra.

After a brief return to England, the family set off for India, where they lived luxuriously for a time. After Gandhi's assassination in 1948 life for Europeans changed and she returned to England with her children. Her husband, who had stayed in India to settle their affairs, shortly afterwards sent a cable asking if she would agree to go and live on a farm in Kenya. Never one to shirk a challenge, she set off for yet another new start in Africa.

Life there was very lonely but, resourceful as ever, Schein discovered a love for gardening that was to remain a consuming passion for the rest of her life. After three years on the farm she decided to return to England in order to send her children to school. It was then that her husband wrote asking for a separation. She was devastated but again accepted the situation with fortitude.

She had to work hard to rebuild her career earning a living through teaching and freelancing. She played regularly with the Goldsborough, the English Chamber Orchestra and the Philharmonia from 1956 until the early 1970s, and was involved in a great deal of chamber music which she loved. She also formed a highly successful trio with the pianist Natalia Karp and the violinist Henriette Cante, made appearances on BBC TV and toured in Europe, as well as touring Israel in 1968 and 1970.

She settled in Priory Gardens in



Gillinson-Schein began her career playing in a silent-cinema band aged 14

Hampstead, north London, where in her spare time, she tended her garden with the energy of a woman half her age. Despite the failure of three marriages, she eventually found happiness in a loving relationship with the Viennese-born architect Joseph Berger, notable exponent in Britain of the Viennese Modernist School of Architecture. This was an ideal partnership which endured until Berger died in 1989. She continued to play right up until her death and on her 90th birthday recorded the first movement of the Bach G Major Solo Cello Suite, which was played at her funeral service.

Her son, Clive Gillinson, manager

of the London Symphony Orchestra, described her remarkable gift of friendship and her loving, gentle, passionate and enthusiastic nature. "She always had time for everyone and I am proud that all our family have inherited that enthusiasm, even if we do drive people crazy with it at times! She never did anything by halves, whether it was her love for her family, her knitting of squares for blankets for Oxfam, which I think could probably cover the whole of Africa, her garden - which is almost certainly the most beautiful for miles around - and always her music."

He went on to say that music remained the centre of Regina

Gillinson-Schein's life. "She never stopped playing or listening to music, and even when she fractured her arm shortly before her 90th birthday, simply started working on the piano until she was able to lift her bow and play her cello again."

MARGARET CAMPBELL

Regina Rebecca Schein, cellist: born Zurich, Switzerland 30 April 1908; married 1920 Joseph Feldman (marriage dissolved 1935), 1938 Joachim Stutchewsky (marriage dissolved 1940), 1945 Stanley Gillinson (deceased, one son, and one daughter deceased); died London 7 April 1999.

George Clive

GEORGE CLIVE was that rare being, a countryman and an intellectual. His father, who came from a long line of soldiers (which included Clive of India), was killed in action in 1943, when his son was only two years old. From his mother's side, he inherited the remarkable Pakenham intellect. He belonged to an extended family of distinguished writers and historians.

This coupling of inherited traits - acute intelligence combined with a stoic sense of duty - was to remain with him all his life. While still at Eton he began to take control of the once derelict family estate in Herefordshire. With the help of Ian Howie, who was his farm manager for over 30 years, Whitfield became a model estate. Their management, guided by both conservation and innovation, was remarkably successful. It is rare to find 1,200 acres of dedicated woodland containing a champion oak tree, and an unrivalled stand of Californian Redwoods. Rarer still is a farm where the diversification is so imaginative that the crops include fields of parsley, squirrel-poisoning hoppers with dormouse-defeating doors and hundreds of Himalayan Blue poppies.

Although Clive's first love was forestry, he was equally able to focus on wild flowers. In a short paper written about conservation practice at Whitfield, he describes an embargo on late summer mowing which ensured the survival of a colony of Ladies' Tresses orchids on the lawn. In the same paper is a meticulous record of the increase in flowering spikes of the Marsh Helleborine, from six in 1983, to 210 in 1992.

All the work at Whitfield was done for the benefit of the estate and of the people whose lives were involved in it. Providing jobs was a prime concern, and the place became a focal point for many people's lives. Local events, from literary gatherings at the Hay Festival, to country fairs, church fairs, timber growers, international dendrologists and charities of all kinds, homed in on Whitfield.

The lakes and folies that Clive designed and built at Whitfield with his own hands, and the trees that he planted, made a garden worthy of the picturesque landscape that surrounded it. As a gardener, his knowledge was formidable. He judged trees and shrubs for the Royal Horticultural Society (he could spot a Magnolia hypoleuca from 200 paces), and at home he always had an eye for the best plant.

His good-mannered modesty meant that he spoke rarely at meetings, but when he did, it was worth listening. As a member of the National Trust's Estates and Gardens Panels, his advice was invaluable. He enormously enjoyed his role as Chairman of the Herefordshire branch of the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens, attending meetings about bamboos or ferns with the same gusto as he brought to everything he did.

A fast mover, he was hard to keep a pace with, and his conversation was hardly pedestrian. The perpetual quest for knowledge was conducted at a cracking pace. Blessed with an encyclopaedic mind, he never confined it to country life, but read voraciously, novels, biographies, poetry, newspapers and any printed matter, absorbing information like a magnet attracts iron filings. He spent the two days before he died learning the Latin names of all the diseases on the ward at St Thomas'.

Clive never married, but for the last 15 years he shared his life with the painter Penny Graham, who supported him in all his interests and enthusiasms. Together they enjoyed theatres, art galleries, travel, gardens and the friends who were

TOM VALLANCE

Clive: an eye for the best plant regularly and generously entertained at Whitfield.

A host of people who regarded George Clive as a tower of strength was shocked by the suddenness of his death, from lung cancer. He seemed to have more energy than a teenager, and his immunity to physical discomfort was legendary. The man who could linger in the sub-zero temperatures of the Kew Seed Bank at Wakehurst was never one to complain of feeling ill.

MARY KEEN

George Meysey Clive, gardener and landowner: born 29 December 1942; died London 17 April 1999.

Don McGuire

DURING THE last half of the Forties, Don McGuire enjoyed a steady career in films as an actor typifying the regular all-American "Joe" in likeable fashion without ever making the sort of impression that would lead to major stardom. In 1951 he wisely switched to writing, for which his background in journalism had prepared him, and directing.

Though much of his work was undistinguished, he had a hand in the writing of two outstanding movies, John Sturges's fine thriller *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955) and Sydney Pollack's comedy *Tootsie*, for which McGuire received an Oscar nomination, along with his co-writers Larry Gelbart and Murray Schisgal. He also worked extensively in television, creating the hit show *Hennessey*.

Born in Chicago in 1919, McGuire worked on local Hearst newspapers as a journalist, then after spending four years in the US Army went to Hollywood as a press agent. His boyish charm led to the offer of a film contract with Warners and he made his screen debut as a wounded soldier in *Pride of the Marines* (1945). Roles followed in two of Joan Crawford's best films, *Humoresque* (1946, as a barman) and *Possessed* (1947, as a hospital intern) tending

to the traumatised Crawford. In *Nora Prentiss* (1947), he was a young van driver who starts the film's events in motion when he runs down and slightly injures Ann Sheridan, and in *The Man I Love* (1947), starring Ida Lupino, he had one of his best roles as a young husband who spoils his flighty wife (Dolores Moran).

When Warners let him go in 1948 he found himself mainly in B movies, though one of them, Richard Fleischer's *Armoured Car Robbery* (1950) was a superior thriller in which McGuire made a strong impression as Danny Ryan, a rookie detective assigned to work with a seasoned veteran (Charles McGraw) who has just lost his partner. At the film's climax, Ryan nearly loses his life during a tense undercover ruse.

One of McGuire's last films as an actor was *Double Dynamite* (1951), in which he played the womanising son of a bank manager - an important film for him in that he formed a friendship with its star, Frank Sinatra. Later McGuire was to write the Sinatra film *Meet Danny Wilson* (1952) and both write and direct the western *Johnny Concho* (1956) starring Sinatra.

McGuire's first screenwriting credits came when he wrote the orig-



Jessica Lange and Dustin Hoffman in *Tootsie*, 1982; McGuire won an Oscar nomination for the screenplay

inal stories for two B thrillers, *Double Deal* (1950), a murder mystery set in the world of oil wells, and *Dial 1119* (1950), a minor but engrossing movie set in a bar where a psychopath (Marshall Thompson) holds captive a disparate group of customers. The film made notable use

of the bar's television set to further the narrative, one of the first times that the then-fresh medium had been used as an important plot device. McGuire's script for *Meet Danny Wilson* was a skilful blend of comedy and drama neatly tailored for Sinatra, but his story and screen-

play for the Donald O'Connor-Jane Leigh musical *Walking My Baby Back Home* (1953) was tediously lacklustre.

He fared better with his adaptation of a Howard Breslin story, *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955), though Millard Kaufman wrote the final screenplay for this powerful drama in which a one-armed stranger (Spencer Tracy) arrives in a remote western town just after the end of the Second World War and uncovers a dark secret. McGuire co-scripted two Martin and Lewis vehicles, *Three Ring Circus* (1955) and one of their original stories, *One of the original stories*. One of the highest-grossing films in the history of Columbia Pictures, this rerelease comedy of sexual identity and the vagaries of show business was an enormous hit and won an Oscar nomination for its screenplay. McGuire expressed displeasure at some of the changes that were made to the original conception - the final screenplay was by Gelbart and Murray Schisgal, with uncredited additional work by Elaine May.

A satire on films about juvenile delinquency, *The Delicate Delinquent*, was like McGuire's Sinatra western *Johnny Concho*, only a moderate success and McGuire moved into television where, in 1959, he created, as writer, producer and director, the series *Hennessey*, which ran for three seasons. Set at a naval base in San Diego, it starred

Jackie Cooper as a young medical officer who treated the base personnel and their families, with Abby Dalton as his nurse-sweetheart and James Komack as a Bilko-type naval dentist.

McGuire spent most of the next 20 years working in television, and during that time wrote three novels largely based on his experiences, *The Day Television Died*, *1600 Floogle Street* and *The Hell With Walter Cronkite*. When McGuire returned to the big screen, it was with a gigantic success, *Tootsie* (1982), for which he and Larry Gelbart wrote the original story. One of the highest-grossing films in the history of Columbia Pictures, this rerelease comedy of sexual identity and the vagaries of show business was an enormous hit and won an Oscar nomination for its screenplay. McGuire expressed displeasure at some of the changes that were made to the original conception - the final screenplay was by Gelbart and Murray Schisgal, with uncredited additional work by Elaine May.

TOM VALLANCE

Don McGuire, actor, screenwriter and producer: born Chicago 28 February 1919; died Los Angeles 13 April 1999.



Stott: outspoken

Lord Stott

WITH THE death of Gordon Stott, Scotland has lost a distinguished judicial figure and a remarkable legal personality some months short of his 90th birthday.

After a notable career at the Scottish Bar, where he acted predominantly for industrial workers in accident cases, Stott was Lord Advocate in the first Wilson administration from 1964 to 1967. It was an office in which he relished his total independence of government as a public prosecutor and legal adviser, for his independence of mind and outspokenness were characteristic. As Lord Advocate then he was responsible for promoting certain overdue law reforms which had been advocated but not implemented and for the setting up of the Scottish Law Commission alongside its counterpart for England and Wales.

He became a Senator of the College of Justice (High Court Judge in Scotland) in 1967, retiring in 1984 on reaching the statutory age limit of 75, latterly having served in the First Division appeal court (formerly chaired by the late Lord Clyde, the Lord President Clyde).

Stott had an acute legal mind partly hidden behind a somewhat bluff, no-nonsense and gently mocking manner. His pleading was a model of forceful economy and he was a formidable opponent as Lord Clyde found the hard way - by having his adverse judgments routinely reversed when Stott appeared before them to the House of Lords (which could have benefited from having him as a Lord of Appeal).

Gordon Stott was born in 1909, a son of the manse. He had a conventional education at Edinburgh Academy and Edinburgh University

where he was a distinguished law scholar. He espoused socialist politics in the 1930s which did not endear him to the legal establishment when he was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates in 1936. He was a founder member of the Muir Society of Labour lawyers just before the outbreak of the Second World War and for a time he was secretary of the Edinburgh Trades Council.

As a man of strong principles he was a pacifist and conscientious objector during the war, doing agricultural work in place of military service. He gave his services free as counsel for other objectors before the tribunal for conscientious objectors. During the war years he edited a Labour journal, the *Edinburgh Clarion*. Though a Labour parliamentary candidate on several occasions he was not elected to Parliament.

After the war he was an Advocate-Depute (prosecuting counsel) and took silk in 1950. Before being appointed Lord Advocate in 1964 he was a member of the Monopolies Commission, 1949-56, and Sheriff Principal of Roxburgh, Berwick and Selkirk, 1961-64.

In his personal life Stott was friendly and compassionate, with a preference for plain speaking and zero tolerance for hypocrisy or pretension. A tall figure with a somewhat windswept look, he was to be seen striding over the local hills or walking his dog (which was said on occasion to accompany him to court - and in court - when he was a judge). As a keen walker his latter years were unhappily restricted by failing legs. His mind remained as sharp as ever.

After retiring Stott published three biographical volumes reflect-

ing diaries which he had kept for much of his life: *Lord Advocate's Diary* (1991), *Judge's Diary* (1995) and *QC's Diary* (1998). These contained entertaining anecdotes and insights on contemporary legal life and politics. But it was generally felt that they revealed more about Stott the man than about the personalities targeted.

RONALD KING MURRAY

George Gordon Stott, judge: born Edinburgh 22 December 1909; Editor: *Edinburgh Clarion* 1939-44; Advocate-Depute 1947-51; QC 1950; Sheriff of Roxburgh, Berwick and Selkirk 1961-64; PC 1964; Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland (as Lord Stott) 1967-84; married 1947 Nancy Braggins (one son, one daughter); died Edinburgh 12 April 1999.

All the way to the bank

Twenty years ago the Comedy Store opened in London, bringing American-style alternative stand-up to the UK for the first time. Today, what was once edgy, angry and subversive has become big business. By John Crace

Alexei Sayle and Sandi Toksvig you will have heard of. But what about Nina Finburgh, Bill Beckett, Ed Shirman, Bob Flag, Brian Beck and Jon Jon Keefe? These were just a few of the wannabe comedians who replied to adverts in *Punch*, *The Stage* and the *Evening Standard*, got paid nothing and were present at the birth of alternative comedy as part of the first-night line-up of the Comedy Store on 19 May 1979.

Before the Comedy Store opened its doors above a Sobo strip club, stand-up comedy in this country was middle-aged, middle-class and Little England in mentality. "The scene was dominated by the likes of Jimmy Tarbuck and Lenny Bennett," says Don Ward, the Comedy Store's founder. "I wanted to create a club that was based on the US stand-up circuit, which would have relevance to young people." So out went the mother-in-law and racist jokes and in came a new political agenda, fuelled by resentment of the Thatcher regime.

In hindsight, its success seems inevitable. The only real surprise is that no one had thought of it earlier. But at the time Larry Adler wrote off the Comedy Store as just "an undisciplined load of rubbish that would never catch on", and an early billing including Rik Mayall, Ade Edmondson, Nigel Planer and French and Saunders planned in only nine punters.

Don Ward admits that it was all a bit chaotic at the start. "French and Saunders died on their first week after week, but they kept coming back for their £15," he says. But after a while some comedians got better, some got well-known, and some got both. Within five years rival clubs such as the Banana in Balham and Jongleurs in Battersea sprang up, and the ever quick-off-the-mark TV producers thought money could be made, "even if the stand-ups did use bad language". And that was really that as far as



You saw it here first: in hindsight, the Comedy Store's enormous success was inevitable

alternative comedy was concerned. Performers who had started out as the last word in cutting edge became mainstream fodder for the late-night TV schedules, working hard to hone their acts for the mid-evening TV slots. The clubs still thrived, of course, because there were plenty of people who had got to enjoy live comedy as an alternative to the mind-blowing tedium of most rock gigs, but for most comedians, the clubs had become less of an end in themselves and more a potential launchpad to TV and "loadsamoney".

On any Saturday night in London today there are around 250 different comedy venues to choose between, and in the UK as a whole,

almost double that. Some are still little more than a dingy, smoky room above a pub, but this is less out of financial necessity and more out of the owners' belief that the public want to feel they are living a little bit recklessly. Make no mistake about it, comedy is an industry and for those in charge, an extremely lucrative one.

To be fair, some clubs have tried to retain the atmosphere of the early days. Despite having moved to a much plusher 400-seater theatre just off Leicester Square, Don Ward's Comedy Store has done its best not to dilute the brand. Comedy is what's on offer, and comedy is what you get. If you're very lucky you may even get an impromptu

performance from the likes of Eddie Izzard or Bill Bailey, who just happen to be passing by. Even so, Ward is weakening as the pound signs beckon and he's thinking of opening another couple of Comedy Stores up north.

But he's got a long way to go before he matches Jongleurs, which was bought a few years ago by Regent Inns. It has now become the Asda of the comedy circuit, with branches in Camden, Bow, Leicester, Watford, Nottingham, Oxford and Southampton, and has a full-time team of 10 at its centralised booking call-centre. "We take between 6,500 and 7,500 bookings per week," says Nigel Pitman, a Jongleurs spokesman.

Nothing can compete with Avalon though, the company which represents some of the biggest names in the business, such as Frank Skinner, David Baddiel and Harry Hill, and has recently expanded into production and promotion. Don Ward calls Avalon "a bunch of strange, pontificating twats", which may strike a chord with anyone who has seen their staff parading at the Edinburgh Festival in identikit black shirts and with a vigour bordering on zealotry.

Not that Avalon care much what Ward or anyone else thinks. "We put on the biggest live comedy gig of all time when Newman and Baddiel played to 12,000 at the Wembley Arena," says James Harrington, Avalon's proudly. "This prompted Janet Street-Porter to call comedy the new rock'n'roll." Avalon now runs The Comedy Network, which last year delivered over 500 nights of the Avalon experience into clubs and universities, and has been picked up by Channel 5.

It's hard to mean too much about the money. Posh Spice earns a fortune on little talent, so why shouldn't a comedian with plenty more earn a decent wage? Nigel Pitman reckons that a good club stand-up can make £30,000 per year and that once you make it on to TV, the sky's the limit. And yet one can't help thinking that somewhere along the line, money has made comedy a little too safe and anodyne.

Nowhere is this better illustrated than on the corporate circuit. Businesses that would once have booked Paul Daniels for their annual night out now go for "yoof" appeal by booking stand-ups from the circuit. And stand-ups, who would once have sneered at an invitation from a company whose politics they despised, happily turn up because they can earn between three and 10 times as much for a set. Last Christmas, the corporate arm of Jongleurs took over £1m.

"Companies such as Saatchi & Saatchi and Morgan Grenfell have approached us to organise events," says John Davy, Jongleur's managing director. "We do everything from booking the acts to briefing the comedians on the fables of selected members of the company." The comedians know the rules and are happy to abide by them.

"The client gets what he pays for," says Bob Mills, the TV stand-up, candidly. "I was once asked, six minutes before I went on to mention a particular product in my act as it would give the sales force a boost. So I did." Isn't this all hideously un-PC for a right-on comedian? "Yeah," he admits with a laugh. "I often think back on conversations I had with Alexei Sayle 10 years ago about how comedy was going to change the world and I wonder where we went wrong."

Tough going

DANCE

GRAEME MILLER
THE PLACE THEATRE
LONDON

MY GOODNESS, did Graeme Miller, "composer, director and installation artist", give us a hard time. The title of his piece, *Country Dance*, and his announced collaboration with the choreographer Matthew Hawkins, seemed to promise at least some dance content. But in fact this was minimal - ghostly fragments of folk dance culminating in a couple of brief sequences towards the end. Instead we got movement theatre with running, hysterics and speech. Fine, except that it is thin material stretched thin and the 100 minutes tick away at a snail's pace.

The banality of shouted phrases such as "arterial road" and "limited waiting zone" may faithfully represent urban life, but it is ineffectual theatre. Game-like sections such as the line of people voicing customer complaints - "the coffin is one foot too short", "these condoms are lemon-flavoured" - suggest they were created through group improvisations, à la Pina Bausch. But this is fourth-rate Bausch, unimaginative and long-winded.

Clearly the cast are city-dwellers: stressed, mobile-phone-toting, deafened by the roar of overhead aircraft. A man with a stethoscope attends to collapsing people. Later he comes to resemble an elephant, torso swaying, stethoscope dangling, since Miller's purpose is also to remind us of our primitive roots and the natural world. Scratch a larger lung, he seems to be saying, and you will find a tribal animal, which is all very true and potentially interesting and deserves a more articulate exposition.

Graeme Miller made me want to scream. And where was he? After a fleeting appearance at the start, he returns three-quarters of the way in carrying a briefcase. In it is a sheep's skull, but a noose would be more fitting. By financing this enterprise, the Place Theatre has given him a rope to hang himself.

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Whatever happened to Okri, Isherwood, Durrell and Shields? Peter Parker counts the bodies not in the Library

Old masters and dry Martinis

According to the subtitle of their book, Carmen Callil and Colm Toibin have selected "The 200 best novels in English since 1950". This is the sort of project that always causes arguments since, as almost any poll of best books will quickly show, one person's top 200 is another's slush-pile. Having once edited a similar book, which attempted to take on the whole 20th century, I started reading this one with some sympathy.

I know all about the sheer volume of fiction from which selections must be made, the difficult choices, the inclusions and omissions that readers and reviewers pounce upon. Callil and Toibin assure us that their collaboration has been reasonably harmonious. "We chose these books together on the basis that the idea of two people disputing - hotly at times, not at all on other occasions



The Modern Library
by Carmen Callil and
Colm Toibin

Picador, £12.99, 240pp

- is always preferable to one person laying down the law," they tell us. In only two cases were their differences left unresolved, when each editor fought for different novels to represent Saul Bellow and V S Naipaul. These two writers get two entries each; in every other instance authors are represented by a single work.

The Modern Library was embargoed and reviewers' copies arrived in jiffy-bags labelled "Confidential". To be opened by addressee only. Not unnaturally, though as it turns out quite unreasonably, this raised expectations that the book would be highly controversial. Attitudes are struck in the introduction, where the editors (one Australian, the other Irish) state they both come from what they are pleased to call "the Free World" (incorrectly defined as not England or America). They also claim to have "not the slightest interest in political correctness", but neither circumstance seems to have impinged upon their choices or their comments. They have put together a disappointingly dull and inoffensive little book.

"Any list such as this is entirely personal," Callil and Toibin acknowledge. This is undoubtedly true, so it was perhaps unwise of them to give so slender a volume so authoritative a title as *The Modern Library*. Any modern library that does not include work by the following authors cannot help looking a little depleted:



Missing, presumed not wanted: clockwise from top left: Carol Shields, William Boyd, Joyce Carol Oates, Ben Okri, Hilary Mantel and Vikram Seth don't make it into the latest attempt to define the modern library

Peter Ackroyd, Paul Auster, Paul Bailey, Nicholson Baker, John Barth, Donald Barthelme, William Boyd, Malcolm Bradbury, Brigid Brophy, Truman Capote, William Cooper, Lawrence Durrell, John Fowles, Jane Gardam, Georgina Hamrick, Han Suyin, Susan Hill, Christopher Isherwood, Dan Jacobson, Ken Kesey, Hanif Kureishi, Laurie Lee, Penelope Lively, Alison Lurie, Rose Macaulay, Sibana Mackay, Hilary Mantel, Candia McWilliam, Nicholas Mosley, Joyce Carol Oates, Flann O'Brien, Ben Okri, Barbara Pym, Bernice Rubens, Vikram Seth, Carol Shields, Paul Theroux, Barry Unsworth,

Gore Vidal and Angus Wilson.

This is to list only the most obvious omissions. An equally long roll-call could be made of writers who may not be in the mainstream of English-language fiction but might have hoped for a place in a book which promises to unearth "hidden treasures".

But it is all too easy to carp about omissions, and the editors deserve our gratitude for drawing attention to a number of writers whose work may be unfamiliar: Sam Hanna Bell, Margaret Laurence, Jessica Anderson, Balraj Khanna, Kaye Gibbons, Bapsi Sidhwa, Norman Rush, Eugene McCabe. In any case, we need to judge the book less by who's

in and who's out than by what we learn about those novels the editors see fit to endorse.

Each entry runs to around 250 words, with a supplementary couple of lines about the writer. This is about the length of a publisher's blurb on the dust-jacket of the average novel, and many of the entries do not aspire much beyond that level of recommendation. The book is determinedly - indeed, sometimes noisily - anti-academic, and while this populist thrust is generally welcome, it would have been helpful if more of the novels discussed had been put into some sort of historical or biographical context.

On the whole the editors are content to give us a few lines of plot followed by a burst of uninformative enthusiasm. "This is a most sympathetic novel, full of ideas, endearing, full of gusto," they write of Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda*. Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* is "the sort of book that you would stay up all night to finish"; *East of Eden* is "highly credible, readable and vivid"; *Catch-22* "is a dark and disturbing anti-war book as well as a great comic novel".

Some comments are absurdly inappropriate: it is neither useful for the reader nor flattering to Muriel Spark to be told that *The Prime*

of Miss Jean Brodie is "laced with mother's wit and wisdom". Other judgements are nonsensical: *On the Road* "has all the importance of a classic rock album or road movie". When the editors write that reading Alan Hollinghurst's *The Folding Star* is "like contemplating one of the great paintings of the Flemish Old Masters", or that in *The Little Disturbances of Man*, "Grace Paley adds greatly to the joy of life, each story like sipping a very strong, very dry Martini", we want to ask: How, precisely?

Precision, it seems, is not something that troubles the editors greatly. Far more disturbing than the banality of some of their judgements, however, is the quality of much of their prose. We have no reason to expect a former publisher - even one as distinguished as Callil - to be able to write well, but Toibin is a critically acclaimed novelist and a fine literary journalist.

Since the entries are unattributed, we cannot tell who is responsible for such sentences as: "Raymond Carver chose this selection of his stories before he died, a permanent deterrent to the rash of imitators who have since appeared. Fortunately his writing is inimitable." Who or what is a deterrent? Carver? His tautologically chosen selection? The fact he made it before rather than after his death? If his writing is inimitable, who are these imitators? It is particularly unfortunate that a novel such as Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* should be described as "gracefully written, finely constructed" in a sentence that continues: "It fascinates both as a love story, and as a sensuous evocation of what the English lost most in India - the soul and feeling those sent out to rule her longed for, yet feared the most."

The book is at its most embarrassing when its authors aspire towards what is presumably intended to be "colourful" writing. Our attention is drawn to "the verbal rainstorm that Amis pours through Self's repellent mouth" in *Money*; a character in Henry Green's *Nothing* is depicted "manipulating malice like a sten gun"; Khanna "laughs with his chorus of fools, while his sharp eye makes subtler mincemeat of religious differences and useless taboos."

When the editors write that "The classic English detective story has inveigled readers all over the world into the mysteries of English life", one can only suppose that they think that "inveigle" is a posh word for "introduce". Another attempted synonym for "introduce" is "chivvy", as when they tell us that the words of an "unmistakable" sentence from one of V S Pritchett's stories "chivvy us into the Pritchett world".

You finish *The Modern Library* reflecting on the irony that a book trumpeted as "Everyone's essential guide to the world's greatest pleasure: Reading" provides so little of that pleasure for its own readers.

A WEEK IN BOOKS



BOYD TONKIN
A happy family of constant readers

WORLD BOOK Day unfolded yesterday with an array of Comic Relief-style stunts. Readers unwayed by sermons from Vanessa Feltz should still back its chief good cause: Book Aid International (at 39-41 Coldharbour Lane, London SE5), which last year sent 735,000 vital volumes to educators in 54 countries.

Even in richer climes, books may do much more than furnish a room. In *Ex Libris* (Allen Lane, £9.99), Anne Fadiman collects 18 charmingly obsessive essays about her lifetime of bibliophilia. Fadiman (who edits *The American Scholar*) is the sort of print junkie who can spend "many a lonely night in small-town hotel rooms consoled by the Yellow Pages". Even in the week of her first child's birth, she got stuck into an 1877 primer on "distaff virtues" by a priest. Then she asked her husband to grade her on Father O'Reilly's scale - "religious fervour: 0; thrift, 3", but "kindness, 10; truthfulness, 10".

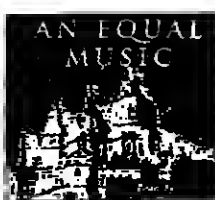
As those scores suggest, this witty book can sound a teeny-weensy bit smug. Fadiman is one of those elegantly upmarket US journeymen who seem so much less grubby than their Brit peers. Writers' memoirs and early novels often tell a tale of learning snatched from the jaws of poverty or mockery. Not so Fadiman, who hails from a book-worshipping family and still cherishes the teenage marginalia in her copy of *Middlemarch* ("page 37: 'Grrr'; page 261: 'Bullshit'; page 294: 'Yecch'").

My delight in a fellow addict's printed pleasures withered only once: as she remembered her folks clustered around the US equivalent of *University Challenge*, trouncing all the jocks up on the screen. This cute foursome called itself "Fadiman U" and only lost to their rivals on the TV twice "in five or six years of competition". One feels (unlike the author) somewhat lost for words - except, perhaps, "Grrr", or even "Yecch".

SPOKEN WORD

BY CHRISTINA HARDYMENT

ADD THE appropriate music to a first-class reader of a first-class story, and the listening experience is even more enhanced. Vikram Seth's new novel is a tale of obsessive love among musicians which should be awarded a place next to *Casablanca* and *Brief Encounter* in the pantheon of noble remembrances of forbidden love. Alan Bates reads Kati Nicholl's sensitive abridgement brilliantly.



An Equal Music
Read by Alan Bates
Orion, 6hrs 25mins,
£12.99

taking us more and more deeply into the at first only opaquely perceived central character. But it is the music which is the tour de force. In the book, Seth makes symbolic use of particular passages from particular composers played in a particular way. Producer Nicholas Jones enriches the reading by letting us hear the music mentioned, culminating in the "equal music" of Bach's *Art of the Fugue*.

PAPERBACKS

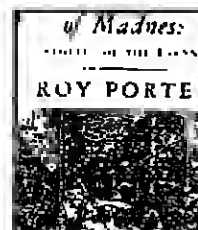
BY EMMA HAGESTADT AND CHRISTOPHER HIRST



1960s
Collins Gem, £4.99
192pp



Freedomland
by Richard Price.
Bloomsbury, £6.99
546pp



A Social History of
Madness
by Roy Porter.
Phoenix, £8.99, 261pp



Once in a House
on Fire
by Andrea Ashworth.
Picador, £6.99, 330pp

DESPITE ITS hilly format, the profuse illustrations in this soapy guide to the swinging decade will trigger potent memories in baby-boomers: *Torrey Canyon* smoulders; Ursula Andress reaches for her diving knife (*Dr No* opened in 1962); and Sharon Tate poses in op-art jeans (she was murdered on 9 August 1969). On the minus side, there is too much about the Beatles and not enough on Vietnam. Companion volumes cover the Fifties, Seventies and Nineties.

READING RICHARD Price - one of Hollywood's best paid hacks - is like living through a particularly hyper episode of *NYPD Blues*. Author of *Clockers* and several screenplays (*The Sea of Love*, *Ransom*), Price's latest book is a meaty thriller set in New Jersey's seamy housing projects and run-down A&E departments. The book's hero, DI Lorenzo Council, faces a long summer with the disappearance of a young boy from his mother's car and an unsolved double homicide.

"MADNESS IS a foreign country" but, as Porter reveals, it has its own rationality. Sketching a design for Kew, George III said that it was "not bad for a man who is mad". An outburst by John Perceval, incarcerated son of a PM, rings as true today as in 1838: "Drench a young man with medicines, shut him in a room of ranting madmen... what good can you expect?" Noting "the mad talk about God, kings and devils as we do... with different nuances", Porter says "we all have phantoms in the head."

OXFORD ACADEMIC Andrea Ashworth's memoir of growing up Northern, poor and abused is a hard book to categorise. Told from a child's point of view, with no retrospective spin, it feels more like a novel than a memoir - not that any of this stops it being an unputdownable read. Brought up in inner-city Manchester, nourished on Spangles and Refreshers, Ashworth tells how she and her sisters survived life in a household dominated by a violent stepfather.

INSPIRATIONS

CRIME WRITER REGINALD HILL

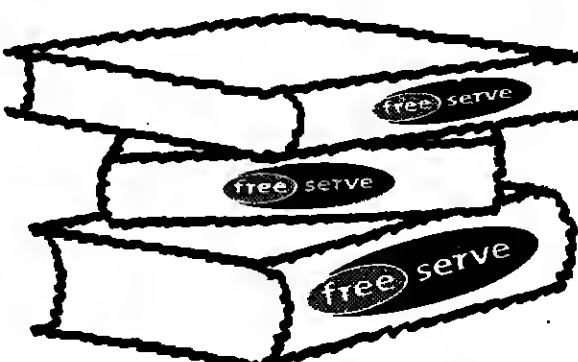
Place: The Lake District where I live. If I had to pick one specially blessed spot, there's a fell top, not one of the highest but in sight of the highest, unapproached by any of the Wainwright super-highways, where a man can sit in airy solitude and think Wordsworthian thoughts, and it's called... but no; you find your own!

Play: *Twelfth Night*. The Man at his most generous, with characters ranging from the irresistible to the unspeakable, humour from subtle social commentary to farce, language from vigorous vernacular to languorous poetry. In a setting which weaves together Illyrian silk and Elizabethan worsted.

Film: For fun, *The Producers*: for fantasy *The Wizard of Oz*: but for guttural impact, it has to be *On the Waterfront* which I first saw way back when it was still possible to stumble on a great movie unawares without having heard it discussed *ad nauseam* on the media shows.

Artwork: From the 1985 Renoir exhibition, the *Jeunes filles au piano*. A young girl leans forward to study the music with her brunette friend by her side. There were three versions on display. I preferred the earliest, an unfinished oil sketch, because to me incompleteness is what the painting is about.

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INDEPENDENT ADVICE FOR THE INDEPENDENT TRAVELLER:
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New England's Pacific coast

Should they have been celebrating St George's Day on the northern Californian coast yesterday? Yes, says Tamsin Murray Leach

Most Americans would be rather surprised to learn that the original New England is not their beloved land of white clapboard churches, colourful autumn leaves and Puritan pilgrims. It isn't even on the East Coast. The New England, or Nova Albion, claimed by Sir Francis Drake for Queen Elizabeth I in 1579 is in fact a small peninsula in California, just north of San Francisco.

Historians surmise that Point Reyes - a popular R&R spot for weary Bay-area dwellers - is the place most likely to have provided Sir Francis and the world-weary crew of the *Golden Hind* with rest and repairs on their journey round the Americas.

Drake spent more than a month shored up in the natural harbour that is now known as Drake's Bay, fixing his ship and blushing attempting to persuade the native Miwok Indians that all good Christians ought to keep their privates covered. Pronouncing it "a goodly country, and fruitful soyle, stored with many blessings fit for the use of man", Drake returned home to deliver the news of this promised land to his queen, only to get distracted by the nasty Spaniards and their Armada. He never returned to settle his claim, and subsequent English colonists took the short route to America, sensibly heading straight across the Atlantic.

Which is a good thing, too, because for the last 420 years, Point Reyes has been largely left alone. After the Spanish discovered San Francisco Bay towards the end of the 18th century, a succession of newly independent Mexican lords held the title deeds to the peninsula. Still undeveloped, it was turned over to dairy ranchers when the Republic of Mexico lost California to the United States in 1848.

You pass by these ranches as you drive through the area's pastoral lands along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, with each ranch originally titled after a different letter of the alphabet. About a dozen are still in operation today, but Point Reyes remains a wilderness for the most part, a peninsula of rugged coastline, redwood forest and inland estuary.

The area was declared a National Seashore in 1962, with the inland buffer of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area serving to protect it from the encroaching suburbanisation of the San Francisco region.

The park, which is less than two hours' drive from the Bay,

seemed surprisingly empty when I arrived. I asked a young and healthy-looking park ranger whether it ever got crowded. He replied pleasantly enough that yes, it did get relatively busy during summer weekends, with campsites filled up two months in advance.

"But it's empty during the week," he said as he leaned forward and lowered his voice, suddenly conspiratorial. "The people who come here are city folk," he whispered, almost vehemently, "and they need to work weekdays to pay for their \$100,000 houses and \$100,000 Visa bills." He shook his head in disgust at such types. I backed away sheepishly, feeling that my credit card was hurting a hole in my back pocket.

Though tourism has been responsible for the regeneration of the small towns that lie just outside the park's boundaries, locals are fiercely protective of their rural, secluded lifestyle. While some have been fishing or ranching on the Point for generations, many are relics of the Sixties counter-culture, and are strongly opposed to the values of big-city society.

Down in Bolinas, a tiny town on the park's southern tip, the old hippies and young runaways who call the place home have built somewhat of a reputation for uprooting road signs. They want Bolinas and its tempting organic bakery to be left in peace, stranded in obscurity for them to enjoy.

It is not quite the enthusiastic welcome that the Miwoks gave Drake. They crowned him with feathers and fell to their knees in supplication, tearing at their chests because they believed that he was a god.

The Miwoks are long gone, sold into slavery by the Spaniards, and their name was mangled by a local resident, George Lucas, for the fuzz-balls in *Return of the Jedi*; the locals today are a little more offhand. But then, you don't visit Point Reyes for the company - quite the opposite.

There are 150 miles of hiking and horseback-riding trails in Point Reyes, providing plenty of options for solitude on even the busiest weekends. I hardly saw a soul along the Bear Valley route, which was fine by me. I peered earnestly at the sign which informed me that I was walking directly along the San Andreas Fault; wandered along a fairy-tale babbling brook that meandered through a mossy wood, with the ground carpeted with spring flowers; and startled a small herd of big-eared deer in Divide Meadow.

If it had been a little warmer, I would have camped in one of the four back-country sites.



Sir Francis Drake claimed Point Reyes, California for Queen Elizabeth I

William M. Smith

But the weather here is reminiscent of the old England, subject to change at any minute, with plenty of sunshine but a tendency for fog and rain to roll in quickly from the shore.

I began my Bear Valley trek on a fresh and breezy morning, picnicked under a blazing sky and speed-walked the last half-mile in a downpour, with memories of childhood holidays in the West Country fresh in my mind.

Wet clothes and the cold spring nights prompted me to stay in the old wooden youth hostel with its cosy reading-room and sunny porch, located in a secluded valley right in the

centre of the park. The hippie hosts show guests the communal kitchen and dorms, assign chores and then withdraw gracefully, leaving everyone to

The beach and estuary are marked as a wildlife sanctuary, and it was here that I first realised the biggest difference between my new and old Albion.

Drake spent a month fixing his ship and attempting to persuade the native Indians to keep their privates covered

just get on with it. After sorting linens, I strolled down to Limantour Beach, within sight of the spot where Drake supposedly landed.

I must have spent hours straining my eyes in English wildlife sanctuaries trying to convince myself that a partially submerged log was the head

of an otter, or that a seagull constituted wildlife. Limantour Beach rewarded me immediately with herons, seals frolicking in the surf close to the shore, and a pelican fly-by over a tide that gilded the sands with reflections from the setting sun.

Over 400 species of birds have been sighted at Point Reyes, and some of the seashore's rarer mammals include the elephant seal and a herd of tule elk, practically extinct until their reintroduction here in 1978. The park is also famous locally as the best spot to watch for grey whales during their annual 12,000 mile

round-trip migration from the Gulf of Alaska to the Sea of Cortez, with buses ferrying hordes of visitors out to the lighthouse on weekends during the prime watching periods between December and April. The days have gone when I could follow Sir Francis Drake's example and just nail the Queen's arms in the form of a shiny sapphire to a post on the Point Reyes shore, thereby claiming the area for my fellow

Englishmen. The sapphire is no more, and pound coins are a little too thick for such deeds. Thanks to new technology, I can however spread the word about my discovery of New Albion a little faster than Drake was able to.

Just don't tell the immigration officials when you arrive in San Francisco that the purpose of your trip is to visit New England - they might get a little confused.

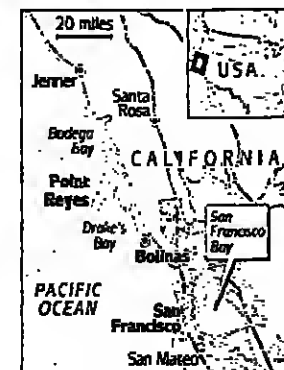
FACT FILE



How to get there: There are plenty of discount fares to San Francisco until the end of June. Non-stop from Heathrow, you can fly on British Airways, United or Virgin Atlantic. Through Trailfinders (0171-937 5400), there is also a return fare of £348 on United in May.

If you are prepared to change planes en route, you can get an even lower fare: Flightbookers (0171-757 3000) quotes £291 on Delta via Cincinnati or Atlanta. The Point Reyes National Seashore is situated off Highway 1 in Marin County, north of San Francisco. Crossing Mount Tamalpais, passing giant redwoods at Muir Woods National Monument and following the rocky coastline of Marin County, the drive alone is practically worth the trip.

Permits are required for camping. They can be bought for \$10 per site at the Bear Valley Visitor's Center, or reserved by credit card up to two months in advance by calling 001 415 663 8054 between 9am and 2pm Pacific Daylight Time (1-8 hours BST), Monday to Friday. Reservations are recommended at weekends and during the summer. Campsites are located anything up to six miles from the nearest parking lot and are accessible by foot or mountain bike. Toilets are provided. Water is available, but must be treated; no wood fires are permitted.



Dorm beds at the youth hostel cost \$12 a night; you do not need YHA membership. Linen and towels can be rented for \$1 each. One private room is available for parents with children aged five or younger. Office hours are 7.30am-9.30am and 4.30pm-9.30pm PST. Reservations are recommended for Friday and Saturday. Hostelling International - Point Reyes, Box 247, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956 (001 415 663 8811); www.hiay.org/ushostel/pnwreg/pnwreg.htm. Provisions can be purchased in the nearby towns of Olema, Inverness and Point Reyes Station. The latter is the highest settlement in the area. The Bovine Bakery produces scrumptious pastries and great coffee, while the Station House Café is a favourite for its seafood and generous bread-baskets. Both are on the main street. More information: consult National Park Service website www.nps.gov/pore/visit.htm, or call Bear Valley Visitor's Center (001 415 663 1092).

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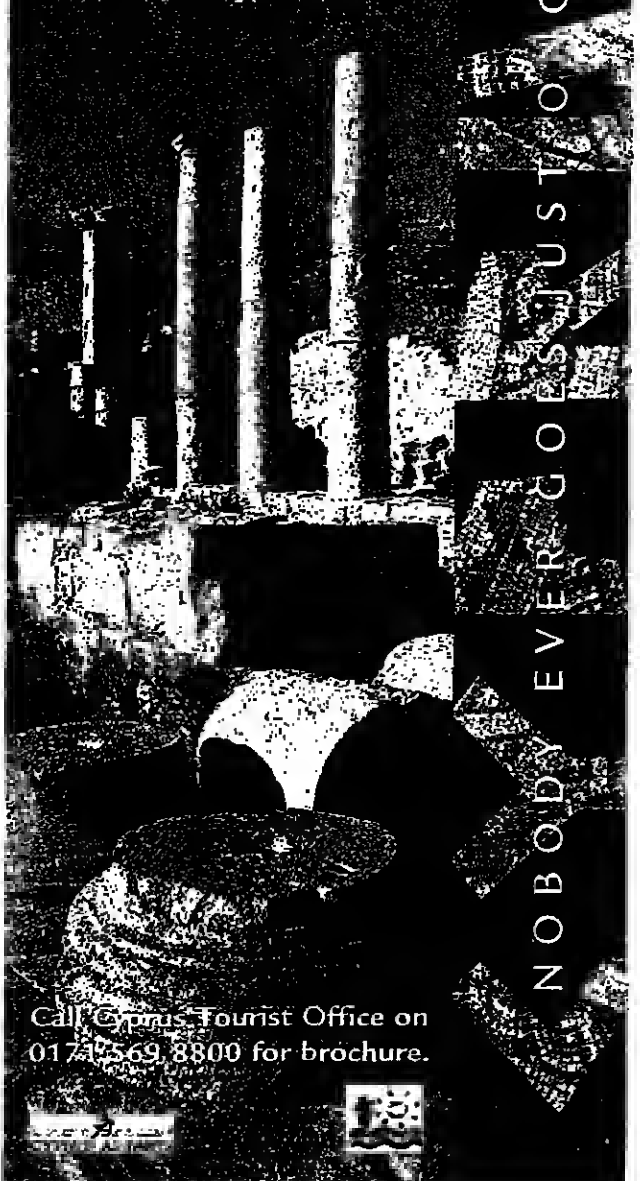
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NOBODY EVER GOES JUST TO CYPRUS

Hamish McRae takes his family on a five-day course in the Red Sea to find out why diving is the fastest-growing activity holiday.

Taking the plunge

Scuba diving is the new skiing. It's not only the fastest-growing form of mainstream activity holiday - skiing used to be - but it also has a similar mix of holiday ingredients: a physical activity, the opportunity to learn a new set of skills, a different view of an extraordinarily beautiful aspect of our planet (looking up through the water instead of down through the clouds), the camaraderie of interesting people, and maybe also that tiny edge of danger. And, yes, if you go for warm waters you get enough of a tan to irritate your colleagues back in the office.

For Britons interested in learning how to dive there are two main options. The first is, or at least until recently has been, a rather military-style training, stiff-upper-lip stuff. Here in Britain, under the auspices of the British Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC), you get a thorough training which will equip you to dive in the murky, difficult and often dangerous waters around the UK as well as more exotic locations. The other is to take a basic course in warm waters on holiday, usually with the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI).

The PADI standard full-time, five-day course was designed, originally by Americans, to be fun - and unsurprisingly PADI now trains more divers than all the other diving associations put together. While BSAC now has a similar five-day course, PADI established a global lead which has been hard to challenge.

So, when we were faced with a

spare week that might have been allocated to late Easter skiing in the Alps, but wanted to learn a new craft, we chose PADI. The "we" in this instance were myself and my wife plus, to our surprise, our 21- and 19-year-old daughters (as with skiing, the prospect of a free and interesting holiday overcomes any latent irritation at the prospect of holidaying with fiftysomething parents).

On the advice of an experienced diver, we chose the Red Sea. Enthusiasts may debate whether that or the Maldives, the Caribbean or the Great Barrier Reef offer the best diving in the world. But for the learner, the Red Sea is perfect: clear warm water, an extraordinary abundance of marine life and established training facilities. It also offers, for British-based divers, the nearest coral reefs in the world and - if you stay in the Sharm el Sheikh region of Egypt - it's just a five-hour flight from Gatwick and a 20-minute transfer at the other end. In practical terms (allowing for the shorter transfer and the cheaper cost of accommodation), the Red Sea is as quick to reach and as cheap to book as the Alps.

And the diving? There are a number of skills that you have to learn, such as clearing a mask underwater and adjusting your buoyancy so that you don't keep bobbing upwards and plunging back down, which are not difficult but do require familiarity with the water. There is also a certain amount of theory that you need to know, like how to calculate the amount of nitrogen the body has absorbed during its time underwater and how long it will take



The Red Sea offers British divers the chance to explore coral reefs relatively close to home

Louise Murray

for that to return to normal. Errors can prove very serious.

If this sounds a bit daunting, the PADI course is a brilliantly designed example of structured adult learning: a mixture of videos, classroom teaching, pool training (our "pool" was a coral-rimmed, fenced-off bit of the Red Sea) and open-water dives. I suspect we were particularly well taught. The school (the Red Sea Diving College at Na'ama Bay, just north of Sharm el Sheikh) specialised in diver training up to instructor level and we were also lucky with our instructor, Tamer, a thoughtful Egyptian who had exchanged the hassles of computer programming in Cairo for the lifestyle of the Sinai. And the

learning was fun. Compared with five days being shouted at in a ski school, the PADI course was a joy.

The reward? As a newly qualified diver you are limited to 18 metres depth, and the practical time limit for a dive is about an hour, maybe less. But during an hour underwater you can see 50 or more species of fish and coral forms: the smaller multi-coloured reef fish nibbling away at the coral, the occasional visit from a giant tuna sashaying in from the deep blue beyond, the grey moray eel poking its nose out from a rock, the blue spotted stingray doing a little floor-show shuffle in the sand - and so on. For the novice it is thrilling, educating and humbling.

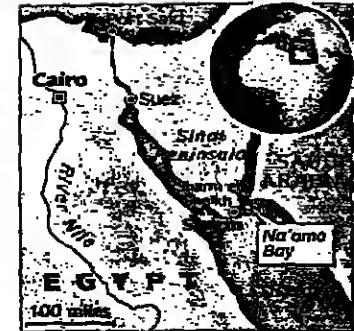
Finally, one worry and one

pleasant surprise. The worry is the extent to which diving may itself damage the environment. Coral is threatened everywhere. At Sharm, the authorities have worked hard to preserve their reefs and one has to hope that the money from diving will encourage continued efforts at conservation, but the explosive growth of the urban sprawl must be putting great pressure on the environment.

Decompression rules require that divers do not fly within 24 hours after diving, so we used the spare day to head up the coast to a nature reserve and then into the mountains. So far the development is contained to a narrow band on the coast, but the danger that we might kill the things we love is ever-present.

The surprise was to find out just how nice scuba divers are as a breed: helpful, thoughtful, tolerant of the incompetence of novices - and with none of that brash, show-off style of skiers who should know better. Yes, I think we will probably go skiing next year, for it is hard to match the exhilaration of swooping down a mountain. But we will certainly try and grab a few days scuba diving too. Are we hooked? I guess so - it is, after all, wonderful to discover a new excitement.

A really quite youthful Hamish McRae paid a total of £4,000 for his holiday, which was booked through Crusader Leisure (0181-744 0474). The package included return flights



from Gatwick to Sharm-el-Sheikh airport, all transfers, bed and breakfast accommodation at the Marriott Hotel and the open water PADI certification course for a family of four.

SHOPPING FORECAST



Diving masks with lenses are now available, including the popular Tusa Liberator (left), which costs £96

IN THE WEEKEND REVIEW PAGE 24

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JUDGING BY the response to the item last week on French Motorail, many of you are waiting to spend a lot of money on car-carrying trains this summer - but Rail Europe, the SNCF offshoot that sells the tickets in Britain, is doing everything possible to frustrate your efforts. The company blames problems with its computer system for its inability to accept bookings for the peak holiday month of August; perhaps it should also check its phone system.

The recorded announcement when you call Rail Europe (0990 848 848) insists that August reservations for Motorail will be available from Monday, 26 April. When you get through to a human being, you are told that bookings will not, in fact, open until 3 May. The helpful



SIMON CALDER

Ring Rail Europe and be prepared for the Housemartins' greatest hits

gentleman to whom I eventually spoke suggested that sending a fax to 0171-803 4850 might be easier.

Joanna Mimmack of Exeter writes to describe how she

circumvented what can only loosely be described as a "system". "First, I tried phoning SNCF Paris to book from Lille, but encountered a similar refusal to accept bookings more than two months in advance."

Ms Mimmack then called German Railways in London (0171-317 0919): "We have now booked Motorail to Italy from Cologne in Germany, which is a lot cheaper (£444 return). Calais to Cologne is straightforward on the motorway. Tickets are forwarded immediately by first-class post."

The rest of us, meanwhile, are grimly hanging on the line to Rail Europe, still listening to the Housemartins' greatest hits. Presumably it is someone's idea of a joke that every so often the music comes

around again to the jolly tune "Happy Hour".

To vary things a little in between attempts to get some sense out of Rail Europe, I have been dialling Great Western teleshops. On 0345 000 125 you never, ever get the House-

martins. Instead, on successive attempts you get (a) constant ringing followed by the unobtainable tone, (b) the engaged tone, and (c) someone who tells you that the train company isn't yet taking bookings for trains to Devon and Cornwall in August - despite the most significant astronomical event of a lifetime taking place there.

If you want to book a trip in time for the total solar eclipse on 11 August, the best the reservations computer can suggest is that tickets will go on sale "hopefully within the next month".

Over at Virgin Trains, you can at last make bookings on trains to south Devon and Cornwall in August. At a price. The company says that it has taken steps "to control train loadings". And what is the best way to do that? To increase the lowest fare on sale by 150 per cent. Instead of the usual £30.50 return from Birmingham to Penzance, for example, the lowest fare around the date of the eclipse is a Supersaver, price at a dazzling £75.50.

TWO E-MAILS from the US this week, one silly, one sensible.

"We are so excited," begins a breathless missive from the reservations computer of a cut-price airline, "that you look to Southwest Airlines for low Internet fares. Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond

our control, Southwest Airlines is not offering any click'n save Internet specials this week."

Rather more exciting was a message from Raphael Soifer, who describes himself as "a prudish American reader".

"I feel compelled to point out a flaw in Anthony Rose's story last week, which referred to Long Island's 'New England charm', which is fine, except for the fact that Long Island is not and never has been New England. We citizens of New England (which comprises Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Maine) are fiercely proud of our geographic uniqueness. Calling Long Island part of New England is like calling Lincoln the most charming part of Nottinghamshire."



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while the guests at one Bahamian hideaway came for yoga classes, but got distracted by the scuba diving, says Rachel Henry

Cocktails and coral reefs

"A h'm a 62-year-old grandmother," said Sue Weant, in her Scarlett O'Hara accent, as she flapped across the deck in wetsuit, flippers and air tank. "Ah can't believe ah'm doin' this." Standing at a gap in the boat railings, she stepped over the side and vanished into the Caribbean.

Being a natural wimp, I couldn't believe it either as I stood in the sun, knees buckling under the weight of the tank, ready to follow Sue in a free-fall to the water's surface.

"Fix your eyes on the horizon," said Garvin, our Bahamian dive-master. "OK, now step forward." My brain tried to tell me to move but the leg wasn't keen. "Go on," said Garvin. "You'll be fine." So I stepped, and after a moment's confusion and noise, the turquoise world below became a place of deep calm and quiet. Except for the sound of breathing. In... out... in... out. We had been warned: if you hold your breath while swimming upwards, the pressure change expands the air, your lungs explode and you die.

I'd had no intention of diving when I arrived three days earlier at Small Hope Bay Lodge on Andros Island, in the Bahamas. I'd booked in for a winter getaway - a week's yoga course - but everyone, including Dolly, the yoga instructor's mother-in-law, who is in her seventies, was snorkelling or diving between classes. It seemed a shame to miss out.

Sue and I did our safety training one afternoon. Garvin took us out to Goat Cay, a tiny island with a shaggy white-sand beach. He was thorough, repeating the procedures until we had them right - how to breathe underwater, how to hold our noses and blow to equalise ear pressure, and how to replace mask and mouth-piece should they get knocked off. Knocked off by what, I wanted to know - barracuda? shark? whale?

On a morning dive, one member of our party, Carol, a paramedic, came across a 30ft (harmless) whale shark. She was shaking when she climbed back on board. Mark, a race-horse trainer from Kentucky, had a nose-to-nose encounter with a curious barracuda. "Man, I bled my knees to my chin and just kept that fish in front of me," he said. "No way was I letting that sucker get round my back."

Diving was a revelation. Like flying over a glorious garden with



A dive boat moored off the beach at Small Hope Bay Lodge on the Bahamian island of Andros, by the world's third-largest barrier reef

Rachel Henry

jewel-coloured fish-butterflies. But as I swam towards the coral floor, a piercing pain shot through my head. I tried holding my nose and blowing, but the only relief came by swimming upwards. I looked for my "buddy" (no one dives alone) and couldn't see him. Suddenly the ocean seemed a vast and lonely place to be. Panicking, I struck out for the underside of the boat, pitching in the waves some 40ft away. But the harder I swam, the further away it seemed. Finally, I reached the boat's ladder and clung on: safe, but feeling rather silly. My buddy said he had been below me all the time.

Back at the lodge it was almost time for cocktails. I wanted a nice lie-down first, so I wandered through the

palm trees to the row of wooden cabins. One of the truly wonderful things about Small Hope Bay Lodge is the beds. They are huge, laden with pillows, and have perfectly placed reading lamps. Clean, fluffy towels are delivered daily and rooms are spotless, with doors opening on to the beach. All this more than makes up for the dodgy plumbing. Power-showers are more power-dribble, and the loo lurched alarmingly. One night it was home to a sweet little frog who had swum up round the U-bend. An exception to the eccentric pipework is the hot pool, a Jacuzzi set in a sun-deck and sheltered by mangroves. Bliss.

In the lounge, guests can help themselves to drinks, but at 8.30pm

the staff get behind the old cut-in-half boat that serves as the bar, and hand out cocktails. Garvin's creations taste like rum-flavoured fruit juice: Skeeto - another dive-master, with an Eddie Murphy grin - pours pure rocket fuel. Platters of melt-in-the-mouth conch fritters are passed round and half-an-hour or so later everyone files into the dining room. Meals are sociably buffet-based and delicious: pasta Bahamian-style, baked with lashings of butter and cheese, lobster, curries, local fish, salads - and chocolate fudge cake with everything. This is not a place to diet.

Jeff Birch owns and runs Small Hope Bay on lines set down by his late father, Dick, who founded the lodge in 1960. Dick Birch also pio-

neered the resort diving course. "Anybody can dive," Jeff says. "It's just a matter of sharing information in a safe, uncomplicated way."

An hour's flight from Fort Lauderdale or Miami, Small Hope Bay lies off the world's third-largest barrier reef, and is popular with experienced divers. Americans pop down for the weekend, even for just 24 hours. Some novice divers, such as Mike - a decorator from Columbus, Ohio, and a fellow yoga trainee - find water to be their natural element. Mike trained on Sunday and by Friday was 185ft down: a depth which brought a sharp intake of breath from diving instructors I spoke to in Britain. There's a risk of nitrogen narcosis at these levels, where inexperienced

divers can become dangerously over-confident. But the dive-masters are vigilant, and in its 39 years, the lodge has never lost anyone through a diving accident.

Mike's dives included wrecks, caverns and one called "Over the Wall", where the sea floor drops 6,000ft. I stuck to the pretty coral gardens, forced by blocked sinuses to stay near the surface. Another beginner, Rolly Miller, 12, quickly lost any nervousness. "He saw sharks, so he was happy," said his mother, Marcia.

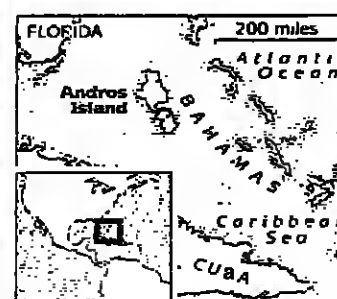
Sue swam down to 50ft, but developed ear problems. A week after we left, she sent me an e-mail from Kentucky. I could almost hear her, saying: "It was wonderful. But ah still have half that ocean in mah head."

DIVE DIARY

THE LONDON International Dive Show takes place today and tomorrow at Olympia, Hammersmith Road, London W14 (0171-335 1200 for details). Tickets cost £5 per adult and £2 for children under 14 and are available by credit card from Dive Show Ltd (0181-977 9878).

TO LEARN to scuba-dive in the UK, or for a list of dive centres, contact: British Sub Aqua Club (BSAC) on 0151-350 6200 (fax 0151-350 6215, website: www.bsac.com), or the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) - on 0117 300 7234 or 01179 710 400, or visit the PADI website (www.padi.com).

THE MINIMUM diving age is 12, but PADI has recently introduced a swimming-pool diving course called "Bubblemakers" for children aged 8 upwards.



Rachel Henry paid £367.40 for a flight from Heathrow to Nassau via Miami with Virgin (01293 747747) and Bahamasair plus \$84 (£52) return via Bahamasair to Andros Town, BA (0345 222111) flies direct to Nassau for £399 if you book this month and travel before 30 June.

A week at Small Hope Bay Lodge (001 242 363 20134; e-mail: SHBinfo@SmallHope.com; website: www.SmallHope.com), costs \$1,120 (£700), full board; dive training is free, and each dive costs \$45/\$55. Diving packages are \$1,510 per week for adults; daily rates available.

Jeff Birch will be on the Small Hope Bay Lodge stand (306E) at the London International Dive Show, at Olympia, today and tomorrow.

Freebie of the week

Free travel for culture-lovers. Visitors to the English and Scottish capitals can benefit from free bus links to two arts venues. In Edinburgh, visitors to the newly opened Dean Gallery - opposite the Gallery of Modern Art - can get there on a new free bus. It runs every hour from the Portrait Gallery and National Gallery in the city centre. The service is sponsored by the car company BMW, and runs every hour between 10am and 4pm (2pm-4pm on Sundays).

SOMETHING TO DECLARE

NEWS FROM THE TRAVEL WORLD

Ticket-holders for shows at Sadler's Wells in London qualify for free travel on the 19, 38, 73 or 341 buses, from places such as Chelsea, Victoria and Piccadilly. The buses stop right outside the opera and dance venue. If you present your theatre ticket and outward bus ticket at the Box Office, you will be given the cash for both outward and return journeys. All travellers, cultured or

not, can benefit from a free ride on Britain's most expensive railway. The Heathrow Express operates free of charge between Terminal Four and the central part of the airport, serving Terminals One, Two and Three. The ride to or from Paddington station in London costs £10, but under-16s travel free with adults so long as the grown-ups have bought their tickets in advance.

Trouble spots: summer charter flight

Plans are being drawn up to limit disruptions for holiday makers bound for destinations, such as Italy, Greece and Turkey, which could be affected by the war on Serbia. With no sign of an early end to Nato action, charter airlines are seeking to minimise delays when the main summer season begins next Saturday.

Russell Ison, from Britannia, said that due to re-routing there may be an extra 10 or 15 minutes added on to journey times, but said departure times from the United Kingdom would be affected.

"At the moment there is a small amount of extra time on flights to Greece, Turkey and Cyprus."

The airline, Flying Colours, said its captains may be asked to fly faster to cut delays.

"Flights into Turkey are being delayed by up to 30 minutes, so we are working on flying at increased speeds," the airline said. "It does not seem to have affected Greece."

Air 2000 are also expecting minimal delays of 10 or 20 minutes for flights destined for eastern Mediterranean resorts in Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus, along with destinations such as Israel and Egypt.

"We are monitoring the situation on a daily basis and will do anything we can to make

sure customers are not delayed," said Air 2000.

In addition to the crisis in Kosovo, the threat of terrorist activity in Turkey is still an issue. Britain's biggest holiday company, Thomson, said that the reduction of customers wanting to travel to Turkey due to recent political threats has been small. "It has affected consumer confidence but the Foreign Office advice is that it is safe to go and customers are reassured when they call in."

There has also been concern that low booking levels for May and June could lead to flights being consolidated, but the leading charter airlines say they have no plans to cancel or combine departures.

Bargain of the week: the secret Caribbean, in style
To celebrate its 25th anniversary of flights from Heathrow to the Caribbean, Trinidad-based BWIA (0181-577 1100) has come up with a deal where one person pays the business-class fare, while the other travels for £25. This provides a cut-price route to two verdant and unspoilt destinations, Dominica and Guyana. For a business-class return ticket to Dominica, each passenger would pay £1,128; to Georgetown, Guyana, £1,314 each.

A similar deal applies in economy class on flights to Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, St Lucia and Tobago: each passenger pays just £309 return. You must book by next Friday.

LOUISE FARRATT

JASPER REES

'I'd better put that funny voice on,' said the woman whose strangled vowels and battered consonants have launched a thousand impersonations

IN THE WEEKEND REVIEW PAGE 30



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Four hundred years after the birth of Oliver Cromwell, Donald Hiscock explores his old Cambridgeshire stomping grounds

The anti-hero of Huntingdon

Though he is captured in a million holiday snaps every year for no reason beyond the fact that his statue stands outside the Houses of Parliament, Oliver Cromwell doesn't have much in the way of tourism devoted to him. But tomorrow is the 400th anniversary of his birth, and all that could change.

Being responsible for bumping off Charles I and creating



a commonwealth - and thereby becoming the only commoner to be head of the British state - doesn't gain you much respect in a country that is heavy on royalist history. Nor is he fondly remembered in Scotland and Ireland, countries he brutally suppressed. But the Cambridgeshire towns connected with Cromwell are doing their best to raise awareness of the man who was Lord Protector of England for five years, and who cast a long shadow over the course of British history.

The three Fenland towns that claim the closest Cromwell association are Huntingdon, St Ives and Ely. All are close together and all are connected by the slow-moving River Ouse. Cromwell's birthplace, Huntingdon, is famous for being the constituency of another, present-day parliamentarian, John Major; it is at one end of the High Street (at the heart of the town's linear layout) that Cromwell was born on 25 April 1599. A mid-19th-century house



A few days exploring the Cromwell triangle will reveal sleepy villages and flat, open landscapes as well as a long-standing history

No one knows how they celebrated the start of the 1600s in Huntington, but there are a few taverns still surviving from those years. One of them, the Falcon Inn on Market Hill, was where Cromwell made his Civil War headquarters later in life, at the height of his powers. Just across the street is the old grammar school where Cromwell was educated. The building, which had once been part of the 12th-century Hospital of St. John, now houses the Cromwell Museum. Amongst

the compact series of displays here you can piece together the story of a man who was born into the gentry, and became a landowner before getting a taste for national politics, military action and notoriety.

His felt hat and garters rest on one display, while the other bits and pieces on view may well have belonged to the great man. The death mask definitely fits the likeness of the portraits that hang on the walls. My sons and I tried to imagine what he would have looked like in the flesh, but we couldn't get be-

yond the hat. It was some hat; you would have bumped into the brim long before shaking its wearer by the hand.

For Cromwell's tercentenary in 1899 the people of Huntingdoore were not prepared to celebrate their famous son by having his statue erected in the town. Neighbouring St Ives, further down the Ouse, put up a statue instead. An unassuming-looking Cromwell, dressed in civilian clothes, stands in the market-place there today, commemorating the six years he spent as a St Ives citizen in the

1630s. The town has an attractive, solid 15th-century stone bridge by its quayside; on the bridge is a tiny chapel that opens out on to a precarious balcony over the Ouse. After a filling breakfast at Connie's Tea Rooms we accepted the waitress' offer of the key to the chapel and got a brief slice of the life of the solitary priest who lived here long ago. He must have been tough, we thought, since the place was uncomfortably cold and damp.

The Norris Museum is further up the river. The building

In fact, there are only two rooms. I enjoyed the fen-skating exhibits and the boys liked the space that had broken in two while turning the first sod in the construction of the town's by-pass. There's a sense of humour about this place, and none of the Cromwell-might-

have-owned-this-maybe approach. Indeed, the museum doesn't have a single piece of Cromwell memorabilia.

For more on Cromwell, head north-east to Ely. The town's striking cathedral, which was once closed down by the Lord Protector for 17 years, can be seen for miles across the fens, but our time was spent tracking down signs of Cromwell. The Tourist Information Office is located in the home in which Cromwell lived with his family from 1636 to 1647. This was also the place

from which he rose to prominence as a tax collector.

The audio-visual tour through the various rooms reveals that, although famously a Puritan, Cromwell led a far from dull life. He was fond of music, drink and bunting, and his table was well laid out with good food - eels, fish and waterfowl included.

If the supposedly haunted room showing a model of Cromwell on his deathbed (a recreation of an event that, in real life, occurred in Whitehall) was too scary for the children to enjoy, then the Civil War room was a hit. Here you can try on costumes from Cromwell's time. Heavy soldiers' helmets, tunics and dresses are available for a hit of historical cross-dressing and there is even a full-length mirror for posing.

A few days exploring the Cromwell triangle will reveal sleepy villages, flat, open landscapes and a sense of history stretching back to well before Cromwell's time. The past is out there, buried under the peat in this corner of Cambridgeshire. Oliver Cromwell's past is there too, but, as a nation, I don't think we really know how to celebrate him. Happy birthday, Oliver, anyway.

A 17th-century street-market takes place from 10am to 4pm tomorrow in Huntingdon (details, 01480 388249). The Cromwell Museum is at Old Grammar School Walk, Huntingdon, and entrance is free (01480 375830 for opening hours). The Norris Museum is also free and is at The Broadway, St Ives (01480 455101 for opening hours). Oliver Cromwell's House is at 29 St Mary's Street, Ely (01253 682062) and is open daily between 10am and 5.30pm. Adults £2.50, concessions £2.10, family ticket £5. An ecumenical service to commemorate Huntingdon's famous son will take place tomorrow in Hinchingsbrook House, which once belonged to the Cromwell family. For details of all further events, visit the Cromwell 400th anniversary website:

www.cromwell.nrgonnet.co.uk

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Get that Friday feeling

Iran is once again opening up to visitors – including Philippa Goodrich, who spends the Islamic day of leisure finding a cyber-cafe amid the carpets, and Marion Bull, who searches for signs of the poet Omar Khayyam

I had been in Tehran for more than a week before I went out on my own. When I did, within minutes I was surrounded by a huge crowd of men and I found myself fielding questions that ranged from the standard "What do you think of the position of women in Iran?" to the unanswerable (by me, at least) "How do you think we should improve our economy?" and finally, "What do you think of Michael Owen?"

I walked away feeling relieved that I had actually watched the England-Argentina match and seen that goal, when another man came running up behind me. "Tell me," he said, "was Princess Diana murdered or was it an accident?" By then I had been in the country long enough to know that it is best to answer all but the most innocuous questions as neutrally as possible. Iran under President Khatami is beginning to open up again, but it is still wise not to be too free with your opinions in public.

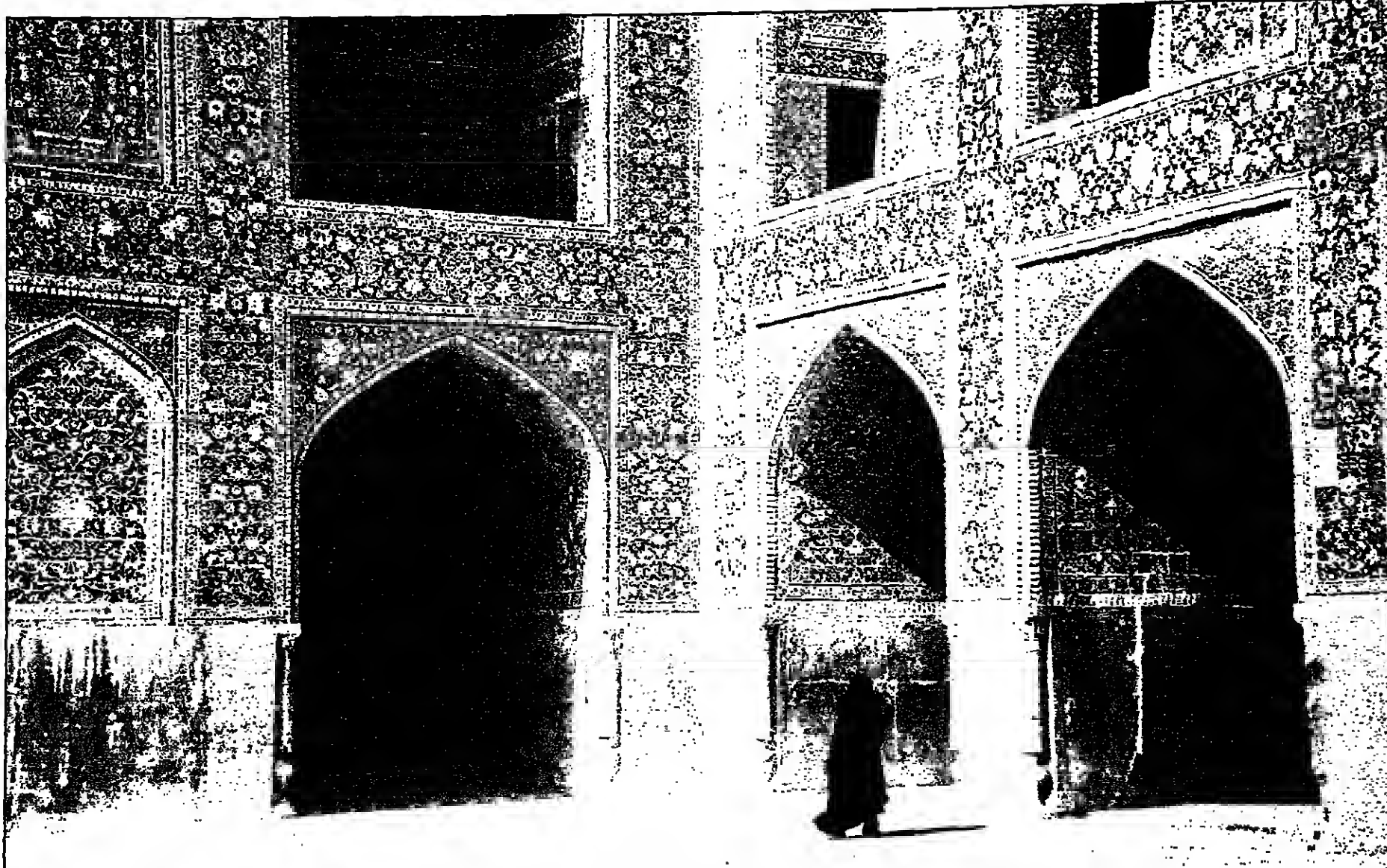
Despite a certain wariness, Iranians are extremely hospitable people and are anxious to see that you have a good time in their country. We had an interesting rather than a wild time in Tehran. I was hoping for a city full of the mysteries of the East, but one look at the hideous Azadi (Freedom) Monument, the first landmark you see after coming out of the airport, put paid to any such notions. In fact, Tehran is a modern, sprawling place which, as we soon discovered, divides physically and socially into the yuppie north and the poorer, more conservative, south.

Most of the city's street trade goes on in the south, and a lot of that happens in the bazaar. I was determined not to go home without a Persian carpet, and we weren't disappointed. It was definitely one of the noisiest and liveliest parts of this sober city: a maze of covered, crowded alleyways where you can buy a range of goods including pistachio nuts, pans and carpets.

Our driver had promised to take us to his friend's shop, so we hurried through most of the carpet bazaar until we reached Mr Keshavarz's emporium, tucked beneath the main thoroughfare. His stock was heaped against all four walls; it had come from the deserts of Baluchistan in the east, and from the mountains around Tabriz in the north west of the country. I was just about to launch into a haggling session for a small Bokhara rug when Mr Keshavarz announced grandly that his prices were fixed; the economy is in the doldrums and carpets are an important source of foreign currency.

Northern Tehran lies in the shadow of the Alborz mountains, although you can see their high, bare ridges only on a clear day. Social codes in this part of town aren't quite as strictly observed as they once were, and pizzerias and cafes where boys and girls can meet each other are beginning to spring up.

We spent a good deal of time in Tehran's first cyber-cafe, which opened a few months ago. The Internet connection was quick, the



Social codes aren't as strictly observed as they once were but Iran's blue-tiled mosques are an impressive reminder of Muslim values

Marion Bull

proprietor, the English-speaking Mr Chizre, was friendly, and the cappuccinos made a welcome change from the sweet, weak black tea that we were offered everywhere else.

The main road leads easily out of northern Tehran to the mountains and the Caspian Sea that lies beyond. We made our expedition on a Friday, and as we drove through the outskirts and into the countryside, the roadsides were crowded with families out for the day eating picnics, their flasks of tea steaming amid the remains of a late snowfall. Having got the impression that this

was a country where enjoying yourself is frowned upon, it was a relief to see the children running around and chucking snowballs at each other.

Surprisingly, although Iran is a clerical society, it doesn't seem to be full of people hurrying with religious fervour. Our driver reckoned that among the 12 million people in Tehran, only one in six was a regular Friday mosque-goer. The much more appealing alternative for Tehran's younger, well-off crowd is the ski slopes. When we arrived at the resort of Shemshak after a 90-minute drive, that's where they all

were. But even here, the mullahs' word is law: there are two queues for the ski-lift, with boys to the right and girls to the left, and strictly no fraternisation – not on the lower slopes, at least.

If the city life of Tehran becomes oppressive, it is easy to take a plane to somewhere else in the country. We chose Isfahan because, as Iranians are fond of saying, "Isfahan nesfe-jahan": "Isfahan is half the world". Once you are there, you can imagine how in its 17th-century heyday it must have felt exactly like that. The city's most famous architectural sight, the beautiful, blue-tiled

mosque of Masjid e Shah, reflects the confidence in his city of its founder, Shah Abbas I.

The mosque is open every day, except on Friday mornings when the area is best avoided, as there has been some factional fighting at Friday prayers in the past few months. It stands in an impressive setting, on one of the largest squares in the world, Nagsh-e Jahan, also known as Imam Khomeini Square. There's a lot to see around the square and it's lined with souvenir shops, though not many of them seemed to sell anything worth spending our money on.

The other great attraction of Isfahan lies in the famous old bridges over the river Zayande. They've been a feature of the city for hundreds of years, and these days seem to be the place for Isfahanis to meet and talk and enjoy Friday, their day of leisure.

On the walkway under the Khaju bridge, young men were singing traditional songs, the notes rolling from arch to arch along the length of the bridge. Meanwhile, the clientele in the tea-house at the end of the terrace was indulging in another favourite pastime – smoking the hookah.

The sound of the water bubbling furiously in the bottom of the pipe, with each pull on the sweet apple tobacco, rose even above the clash of pots and pans and chatter. We were given the best seats in the house, with a fantastic view right across the river, and we settled down with our hookah to order some tea and sugary biscuits.

Isfahan is a good place for relaxing. The questions asked here are easier, too. One student we met managed to slip in a quick, "Why does Britain always support dictators?" But, apart from this, the most taxing query came from Mehرداد, the owner of the Shahrzad restaurant where we stopped for lunch. Would we like lamb cooked in the traditional way, or would we like the dish of the day, chicken?

FACT FILE



Getting there: Philippa Goodrich paid £455 for a return flight from London to Tehran with British Airways

(0345 222111). BA flies on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays from Heathrow to Tehran; Iran Air (0171-409 0971) flies the route on the same days, plus Saturdays. Marion Bull paid £380 for a return flight with Iran Air, which at present offers a free side trip (eg to Mashhad). **Organised tours:** Caravanseraï Tours 0181-691 2523 and Jasmin

Tours (0181-675 8886) are among the few companies that offer arrangements in Iran.

Red tape: Procuring a visa for independent travel is tricky. First, contact the Visa Section of the Consular Department of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, at 50 Kensington Court, London W3 5DD (0171-795 4922; calls taken between 2pm and 4pm). On an organised tour, visa requirements will be taken care of by the operator. **Accommodation:** Philippa Goodrich paid £53 per night for a

suite, including a kitchen, in the Ramtin Hotel in Tehran, and £75 per night for a room at the Laleh International, one of the city's five-star hotels. In Isfahan a room in the Abbasi Hotel, an old caravanserai, costs £75 per night. **Women travellers:** Female visitors to Iran are expected to adhere strictly to Iranian cultural norms of dress and behaviour. All parts of the body, except for the hands, feet and face, must be covered when in public, and outer clothing should be loose fitting.



Wooded with a pot of tea in the desert

IN A cubicle made of black theatre-curtaining, a pair of hands wander over my breasts. They stop at a bit of bra underwiring, and follow the shape round in concern, as though I were hiding a miniature scythe.

I stand submissively, arms outstretched, draped from head to toe in the full *chador* without which no woman is allowed into the Holy Shrine of the Imam Reza, in Mashhad. I hold the borrowed *chador* around me with my teeth, disappointed that it has a tea stain down the front. The female security guards let me through the curtain to a dazzling white courtyard, from where I enter the turquoise maze of endless other courtyards, built over centuries, a mixture of gaudy beauty and calm. For some reason I burst into tears. A man offers me a fig biscuit, and I follow the pilgrims through to a mirrored hall.

I had flown to Mashhad from Tehran to visit the little town of Neishabour, an hour's drive away, birthplace and resting-place of a childhood idol: Omar Khayyam. It was Edward Fitzgerald's translation of the *Rubaiyat* that captured the imagination of Victorian England; in Persia, Omar – inventor of calendars, hater of a spherical world as early as the 12th century – had always been celebrated more for his genius in maths and astronomy than for his anti-establishment poetry. It was nevertheless copied by others in Persia, who in turn became famous.

The guidebooks warned of an uninteresting town and monument over Omar's tomb, neither of which I found to be true. Neishabour's unpretentious low buildings in a quiet setting, against the snow-covered Alborz mountain range, were refreshing after so much city pollution. Its wispy green hilly trees and gardens were a delight.

The monument is a remarkable piece of sculpture or even architecture, somewhere



The desert dwellings seem an extension of the landscape, baked the same colour as the earth

Marion Bull

between a stone jellyfish and what it was intended to be symbolic of: "this inverted Bowl we call the Sky". My only disappointment was that the tomb should stand bleakly on concrete, because Omar was so specific that it should be on grass. Apparently it was moved to this garden from its original burial-place in another part of town, and I wondered what Omar would have thought about people being charged to go in and look.

Living out a fantasy, I searched for an old potter's shop like the one in the *Rubaiyat*'s *Kuza Nama*, the "Book of Pots"; I found instead a pottery museum. Housed in a for-

mer caravanserai, a resting-place for travellers and horses in the centre of town, it displayed pots that were already 1,000 years old when Omar was alive.

The centre-piece of the museum is a model of Neishabour in the 15th century. The originals of the low, hump-backed mud structures, courtyards and covered alleyways it depicts are still standing in the surrounding desert – indeed throughout Iran – many of them still inhabited and looking, from a distance, like low-lying rocky outcrops, an extension of a flat landscape, baked the same colour as the earth.

I was glad I had made this trip. Outside Neishabour, in rusty green hills, I saw the little village of Darrou, with its tumbling spring on various levels and new shoots of spring greenery everywhere. This small corner was worth a hundred trips around better-known desert towns.

Travelling alone, I saw little of Iranian life. If this had been south-east Turkey or Kurdistan I would undoubtedly have been invited to someone's house for tea. But that is not done here, and I was simply watched with curiosity from a distance. I was not taken for a spy, as some had suggested I would be,

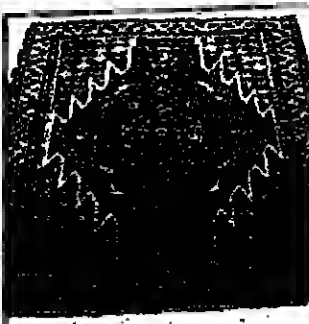
nor was I in the least offended to be ignored at hotel receptions, and to be expected to stand in the background when a man was in front. But the guide who showed me in to Mashhad's mosque complex prior to seeing Neishabour ("Your hair!" when the *chador* slipped), also took me to see the Hezardastan restaurant for lunch, on the outskirts of Mashhad, a place I could not have found, or even entered, on my own. The dining-area was in a dimly lit, windowless basement; when my eyes adjusted to the light I could see that it was full of beds. A couple languished on cushions, absorbed in each other. Three men sat up in bed eating red-spiced rice in a corner and a young boy played a string instrument by the central fountain, oblivious to us all.

Nothing is what it seems. These were not beds, but antique, carpet-covered seats. The dessert we were served with a pot of tea was not a dessert at all, but the first course of a meal of leg of lamb and soup. I said yes when the guide asked me if I was married. I had been told to say I was a housewife, since I was travelling alone. He looked both relieved and disappointed. Omar would have been dismayed that there was no wine to help this scene along, but it was the most sensuous cup of tea I have ever had.

Indeed, nothing is what it seems in Iran. The breast-feeling business by female security guards happened about 10 times, with the departure from Tehran to London being the most fraught. They wore surgical gloves. It was 5am. I was screaming maniacally that my passport had just been stolen.

Re-emerging on the seething-crowd side of the black curtain, I saw my passport being shunted over people's heads. Someone had picked it up after I had dropped it in the rush, and was politely attempting to hand it back. It couldn't have been a more appropriate departing metaphor for this ill-understood country.

THE SHOPPING FORECAST



Journey to the source
No. 12: Persian carpets
Traditionally bought as luxury items and used as investments to be sold off in times of need, Persian carpets are possibly Iran's most famous export – and understandably so. Since carpets have been produced here for over 2,500 years, the Iranians know a thing or two about making them.

The provenance and design of each carpet is crucial. Each region produces characteristic carpets and symbolic patterns – such as lamps to indicate the sacred lamp in Mecca or dogs to ward off evil spirits – are often woven into the wool, cotton or silk. If you want the real thing, buying a good quality carpet in modern-day Iran is not as straightforward as it should be, since – due to high demand, cheaper production costs and competition from India and Turkey – many of the carpets are mass-produced by factory machines rather than woven in the traditional way by nomadic weavers and small village workshops.

So, choose carefully. According to the *Lonely Planet Guide to Iran* (£11.99), buying in an Iranian bazaar can be a real gamble and it's worth reading up before you go. You also need to take into account the fact that you will probably have to pay to get your carpets home – certainly if they take up more space than 12 square metres in total.

If you don't have the patience to seek out the country's small weaving centres, there are plenty of opportunities in Tehran. The Grand Persian Carpet Exhibition and Carpet Conference takes place in the capital each August and is a good place to buy or browse. If you can't afford the carpets here, admire them from afar at the city's famous but fairly small Carpet Museum in Lale Park, off Kargar Street. Alternatively, haggle your way with care through the carpet-sellers along Ferdosi Street in Tehran Bazaar. Philippa Goodrich recently paid \$300 (£190) for a good quality 9ft x 4ft carpet here.

If you bought a similarly-sized handwoven carpet back in the UK at Mansour (56 South Audley Street, London, W1, 0171-499 5602), you could expect to pay upwards of £500 so, buy in Tehran and use the £310 you save to put towards a £380 return flight from London to Tehran with Iran Air (0171-409 0971). That way, you can use the free internal flight that comes with this ticket to go carpet-hunting further afield.

Gadget of the Week: Many people who need to wear glasses are put off diving because of the frustrations of wearing contact lenses underwater or by going without altogether and suffering blurry vision.



If you're prepared to pay, however, you could revolutionise your diving with a prescription lens mask. Ocean Leisure (0171-930 5050) has a range of prescription diving masks that start at around £72 (including the popular Tusa Liberator, pictured, that costs £96 with prescription lenses) and most can be fitted while you wait.

RHIANNON BATTEN



48 hours ... in Granada

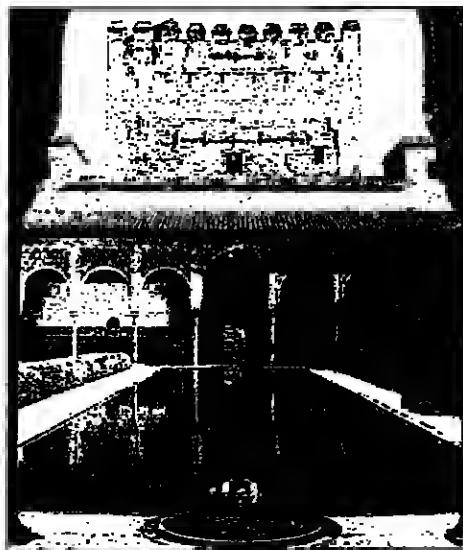
Fly to Granada and celebrate the Day of the Cross with singing, dancing and drinking. By Rick Williams

Why go now?

Apart from the cobalt blue skies, temperatures in the high twenties and picturesque peaks of the nearby Sierra Nevada mountain range, the fiesta of the Day of the Cross takes place on 3 May. Religious in origin, the festival has developed into a two-day hedonistic celebration of singing, dancing and drinking silly amounts of fino sherry. Children, households and local organisations erect crosses throughout the city, and each site traditionally includes a half-smoked cigar, a chair, a glass of fino and a scissor-spiked apple. Most spectacular of all are the thousands of women dressed in brightly coloured dresses who dance swirling sevillanas throughout the day and night.

Beam down

The cheapest way is to fly to Málaga, one of the most competitive destinations in Europe from Britain. Shop around for the lowest fares and most convenient departure airports. For scheduled flights from Gatwick or Heathrow, try British Airways (0345 222111); from Heathrow only, Iberia (0171-830 0011); from Stansted, Go (0845 60 54321); from Luton, Monarch (01582 398333); from East Midlands, British Midland (0870 240 7036); and from Liverpool, easyJet (0870 6 000 000). The best fare we have found is £120 on Go. There are also dozens of charters from all over the UK. From Malaga airport, take the train into the city of Malaga. From there, Granada is two and a half hours away by road. Buses leave every hour from the station on Paseo de los Tilos, around £10 return. Car hire, best booked in advance from Britain, is about £100 a week.



Patio of the Myrtils in the Alhambra

Demure dinner

The Mirador de Morayma ② (Planista Carrillo 2, 00 34 958 22 82 90) is a beautiful old *carmen* in the Albaicin looking across to the Alhambra which, lit up at night, is even more magical. It is also one of the best restaurants in Granada and serves recipes from the local area. Try the Tortilla Sacromonte, which dates back to the years of hunger under Franco in the Fifties, and is made from pig's testicles and brains. It's very tasty. Honest.

Icing on the cake

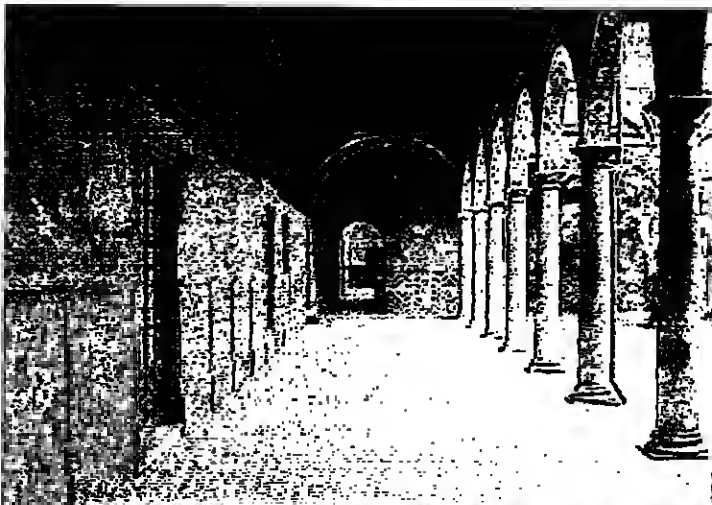
"Give him alms woman as there is no greater sorrow in life than to be blind in Granada." This appeal for clemency, inscribed on one of the walls of the Alhambra, is as true today as it ever was. The palace, with its backdrop of icing-sugar-topped mountains, makes for one of the most beautiful views in the world. And the best place to see it is from the **Mirador de San Nicolás** ⑦ at sunset. If you're lucky, the mountains will turn pink and you'll be left humbled by an exquisite marriage of man and nature.



The Alhambra Palace is sheltered by the Sierra Nevada mountains

Take a ride

It might remind you of the kind of beach holidays you'd rather not experience, but a donkey "taxi" is one of the most enjoyable ways to see the sights of the old city. The "rank" ③ is at the far end of the Paseo del Padre Manjón (00 34 958 22 83 69). An hour costs around £5. But, if you have a car, gun it up to the top of the Sierra Nevada. The highest road in Europe rises 2,500m in about 30km, but a barrier stops you at about 3,100m to protect the top of the mountain from too many vehicles.



An example of the exquisite interior architecture of the Alhambra

See in the dawn

After an evening of tapas and drinks, hunt down the flamenco cave bars in the Sacromonte valley. It can be a bit touristy, but it is worth the effort. Best of all is **El Nino del Almendra** ① on the Calle del Muladar de Dona Sancha near San Miguel Bajo. It's a tiny, semi-private flamenco club for locals. Knock on the door and smile and you'll get to see some superlative guitar playing and dancing.

Albaicin

Cultural afternoon

Busy it might be, but you really shouldn't miss the **Alhambra**, ⑦ open every day from 8.30am to 8pm, and costing about £5 to visit. From the outside, its burnished red walls aren't much to look at, but they reflect the symbolic importance of the "inner" for its Muslim architects. Within are exquisite patios and courtyards, decorated with arabesques and linked by an ingenious system of waterways. Equally impressive are the adjoining Generalife gardens and the Winter Palace, a mass of verdant vegetation.

Check in

For luxury and a setting without equal, the **Parador Nacional San Francisco** ② (Real de la Alhambra, 00 34 958 22 14 6), actually in the grounds of the Alhambra, is unbeatable, although the **Alhambra Palace** ③ (Pena Parida 2, 00 34 958 22 14 68) is flashier. There are plenty of good-value pensiones around Plaza Nueva and Cuesta de Gomerez, but for something a little more offbeat, try the luxurious cave accommodation in the old gypsy quarter of Sacromonte: **Cuevas el Abanico** ④ (00 34 958 22 61 99). If you don't speak Spanish, book through the Internet: granadainfo.com/abanico/english.htm

Take a hike

The old Arab quarter of the Albaicin sits on a steep hillside facing the Alhambra and dates back to the 11th century. An appealing maze of cobbled alleys, delightful plazas and whitewashed *carmens* (villas with walled gardens), it was once home to a mixed community of Christians, Jews and Muslims. They happily co-existed for hundreds of years until 1492, when Isabel and Ferdinand, the Catholic monarchs who are buried in the Royal Chapel adjoining the city's cathedral, expelled Jews from Spain and persecuted Muslims. Many Muslim architectural features, such as fountains and gateways, remain. (Incidentally, in these Abba revivalist days, you may wish to impress your travelling companion with the revelation that, in Spanish, Ferdinand becomes Fernando.)

Lunch on the run

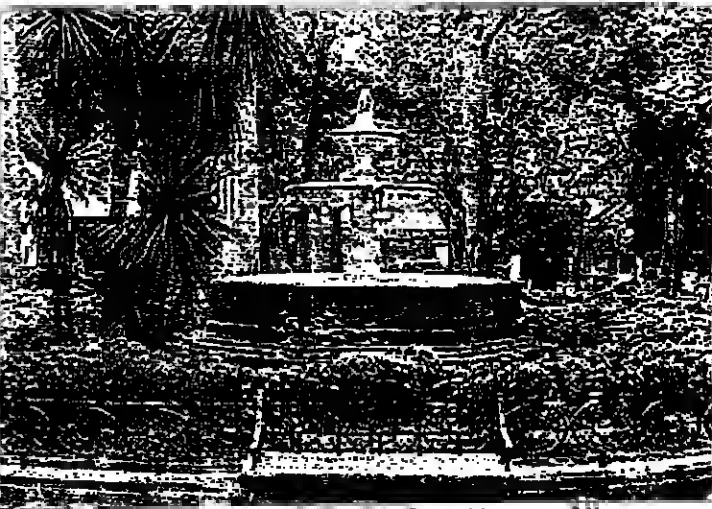
Eat where the locals eat with a trip to the plaza of **San Miguel Bajo** ③ at the top of the Albaicin. Basking in the southern sunshine, the four restaurants here vie with each other, offering leisurely Spanish-style lunches and plenty of opportunity to sit and people-watch.

Get your bearings

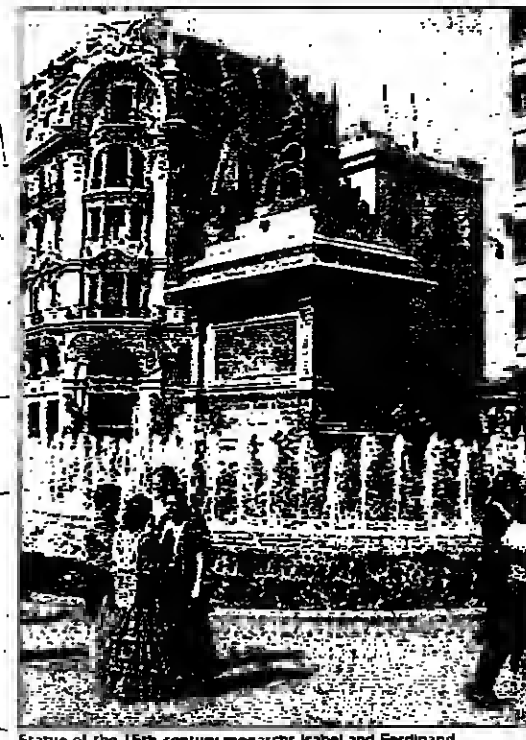
Granada is a fairly compact place. If you arrive from Málaga at the bus station on the Carretera de Jaén - in the modern suburbs - take a 10-minute taxi journey up to **Plaza Nueva** ① at the beginning of the River Darro valley. On one hillside is the Albaicin, the old Arab quarter of cobbled alleys and whitewashed *carmens*, on the other, the Alhambra Palace.

An aperitif

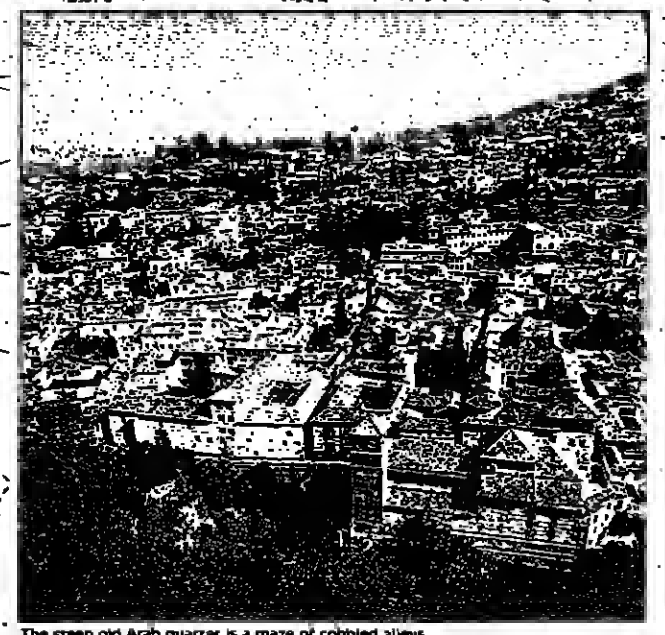
If you fancy a tipple, there are two distinct options. The **Caldereria Nueva** off Plaza Nueva is a cobbled alleyway, lined with Moorish tea shops, which captures perfectly the fusion of Western and Muslim culture that so characterises Granada. **Alfaguara** and **Dar Ziryab** are particularly good. Alternatively, you could bar-hop around the city, drinking and eating tapas. Unlike most of Spain, the tapas are still free in Granada. Try **Bodegas Castañeda** ⑤ on Calle Almirantes and **Casa Julio** ⑩ on Calle Hermosa.



Head to the Plaza Trinidad to see the Day of the Cross celebrations on 3 May



Statue of the 15th-century monarchs Isabel and Ferdinand



The steep old Arab quarter is a maze of cobbled alleys

GLOBAL AGENDA

Brescia and Bergamo
The Brescia and Bergamo Piano Festival was created in 1944 as a tribute to the pianist Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, who was born in Brescia. Uniting the strong musical traditions of these two towns, the festival encourages its invited artists to collaborate and experiment in their interpretation of the programme, which is built around a different author: historical event or musical form each year. Tomorrow's opening concert, "Il Pianoforte di Schumann", performed by the Orchestra Sinfonica della Scala and conducted by Myung-whun Chung with Stanislav Bunin on piano, will celebrate the festival's 35th anniversary. Ivo Pogorelec, Andras Schiff and Gerhard Oppitz will also perform during the festival. Various venues, Brescia (00 39 030 44569) and Bergamo (00 39 035 240140), Italy; from tomorrow until 11 June, £35,000-£150,000

Amsterdam
The whole of The Netherlands will be celebrating Queen Beatrix's birthday on Friday, but the annual festivities in Amsterdam will take some beating, with thousands of people pouring into the city to



'Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse' by Dürer

join in the fun. From early morning, when the first flea markets start, until well into the night, when block parties are in full swing, the canals are packed with partygoer-laden boats and concert halls are throbbing with music, madness and mayhem. Various locations throughout Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Friday, free

Marseilles
The International Festival of Contemporary Music is much more than its name suggests. As well as offering a programme of modern sounds - provided by an international line-up - it

features exhibitions of contemporary art, dance performances, film screenings and conferences, and takes place in some fascinating indoor and outdoor venues. This year the focus is on percussion, and will feature music by the Italian composer Salvatore Sciarrino and the Greek musical theatre specialist Georges Aperghis. Also planned for the festival is a masterclass in orchestral direction with Lorraine Vaillancourt and the New Modern Ensemble of Montreal. Various venues, Marseilles, France (00 33 49139 2900); from Friday until 12 May, Ff40-Ff70

Basel
An exhibition of the early works of well-known artists, "When Artists Were Young", gives a fascinating insight into the development of their styles. The featured artists date from Albrecht Dürer right up to Jackson Pollock and Donald Judd, and the chronological tracing of their work reveals how their initial stabs at creativity are often different to the paintings and sculptures for which they became famous. Basel Kunstmuseum, 15 St Alban-Graben, Basel, Switzerland (00 41 61 206 6262); until 21 June, SF7

SHARON GETTINGS

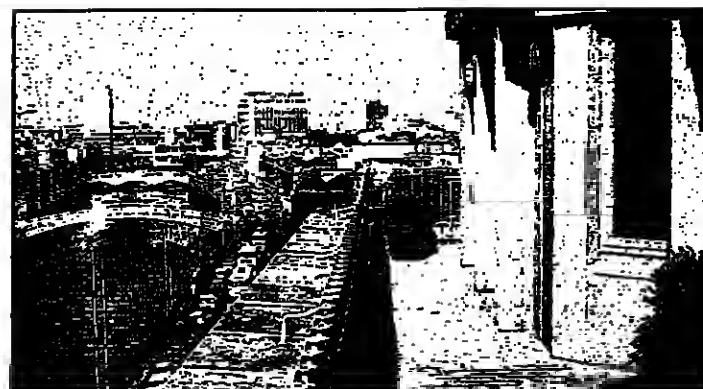
24-HOUR ROOM SERVICE: THE CLARENCE, DUBLIN



GEORGIAN SQUARES, elegant arcades, quaint winding lanes: Dublin is extraordinarily picturesque. However, the Clarence is located on one

of the above. In fact, when you approach it, the hotel looks unpromising, on a dusty, busy road, beside an unphotogenic stretch of the river Liffey. The building is austere by any standards and, when you go into reception, the wood panelling gives things a hoarding-school feel. But once you're checked in, check out the beautiful design details that the new owners created in 1996 and let a warm glow settle over you. The bedrooms are peaceful and perfect for a weekend bolthole, but it's in the communal rooms that the Clarence shines. The Octagon Bar is ideal for that first Guinness, the Study for a fireside reading session. The oddly named Tea Room is a cavernous restaurant, but after the wine's started flowing and fantastic huge portions of hearty Irish food has been consumed, it suddenly feels quite cosy.

The Clarence manages that tricky combination, calm and cool, and it would be impossible to talk about the hotel without mentioning one of its owners,



Bono of U2. The Clarence has true rock'n'roll credentials, and the peothouse suite is ideal for recovering superstars, with a piano, a rooftop Jacuzzi, cream suede sofas and an awesome bed. The staff are fantastically discreet so no, they won't tell you everyone famous who's stayed there, but anyone with taste probably has.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

The Clarence is at 6-8 Wellington Quay, Dublin 2, Ireland (tel: 00 353 1670 9000, fax: 353 1670 7800). Transport: Dublin is mostly walkable, and the Clarence is well placed for the sights. If you're infirm or can't be bothered to walk, taxis are a better bet than the (very crowded) buses. Time to airport: About 40 min-

utes, and there are plenty of taxis available.

ARE YOU LYING COMFORTABLY?

An *haute couture* version of a padded cell, the rooms are plain and simple, with cream walls and heavy curtains. The ecclesiastical theme is pushed with deep crimson furnishings and monk-cell-like lights. The sinning's up to you. And, the penthouse suite is possibly the grooviest in Europe. Beds: Deep and crisp and even, with lots of fluffy pillows, perfect for lazing in until at least midday. Very unmonastic. Freebies: All the usual luxury unguents in the bathroom, with those cute towelling slippers that surely are meant to be taken home (the idea of recycling them

is too, well, unhygienic). Temperature: As you like, and unlike its New York "design" equivalents, in this hotel you can open the windows (some give on to tiny balconies). Bathroom: The bathroom has his'n'bers basins and a very flattering mirror. Relax in the bath or get blasted by the power-shower instead.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

TV: Yes, and it has the full range of channels you never watch at home but suddenly find compelling in a hotel (CNN, Discovery...). Radio: Yes, but if you're in the penthouse, a state-of-the-art hi-fi system awaits, with a hip selection of CDs. Phone/Fax/Internet: Hex politicians hold press conferences on the roof. It's safe to say they are well equipped, technowise.

THE BOTTOM LINE
A "superior" (ie standard) room is Ir£180 (£151) per night; a two-bedroomed suite is Ir£550 (£462). The penthouse suite is Ir£1,450 (£1,218), but a small pop combo could fit in it. Full Irish breakfast is Ir£14 (£12) per person, and you'll be too full to eat for several hours after that. Dinner for two with wine in the Tea Room costs about Ir£60 (£50).

LISA MARKWELL

MODERN MANNERS: YOUR CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP GUIDE TO SURVIVING THE MINEFIELD

Dear Serena

Dear Serena,
At 38, I accepted that the chances of my finding a reliable man to father a child while I was still fertile were slim. Dearly wanting a child and being in a position to have one without needing any financial help, I had a child by donor. Jack is now six, and a healthy, happy child in every way. The only problem is this: he is beginning to show interest in where he came from and, particularly since he started at a church school where most of his classmates are in standard nuclear families, in why he doesn't have a father. What do I tell him?

Emily, Huntingdon

Oh, blimey, Emily, you mean you've only just started thinking about this now? You've had seven-odd years to work out a story, and you expect me to come up with a solution just like that? Please remember in future that if a truth is unpalatable, it's best to get it out in the open as quickly as possible. Secrets imply shame. And shame implies that

you've done something wrong. You must let him know about the facts of life in all their permutations as quickly as possible, before someone else does and makes the turkey-baster option seem freakish. Also: do consider moving him to a secular school. He'll find it easier to cope with his conceptual circumstances if he's not surrounded by little Christian children and their smugly natural parents.

Dear Serena,
My au pair has been helping herself from the drinks cabinet while we're out. The quantities aren't huge, and she's certainly not drunk in charge of the children, but it's still theft. In all other ways, she's ideal. How do we tackle this?

Jane, Newbury

Presumably your au pair is 18? Buy cheaper brands, and make a point of saying: "By the way, you must be desperate for a drink some evenings. If there's a bottle of wine open and you really want a glass, do just say." The

poor child's meant to be living as part of the family, after all, and she will probably get the message if you look knowing enough when you say it.

Dear Serena,
My boyfriend and I have decided to move in together and see how it goes before we commit further. We don't want to buy together until we are sure we can cope with sharing the same space long-term. The thing is, we can't agree on who should move into whose flat. His flat is larger but mine is better furnished (although, of course, he doesn't agree with that). What should we do?

Donna, Birmingham



You have two choices. You could rent a whole new flat and pay for it by renting out both of yours. This might seem like a load of hassle, but couples often find that the political problems produced by one moving into what has so far been the other's space are insurmountable, and it might be better in the long run. The other option is this: move your furniture into his flat and his into yours, then rent yours out. That way, you maintain some level of equal power over your mutual space and, hopefully, by the time you decide to pool your resources properly, his furnishings, which were probably bought, like most men's, in a single afternoon in Ikea, will have been irrevocably destroyed by the lodgers and you

will never have to give bouse room to them again.

Dear Serena,
I was thinking of marrying a footballer, but I'm worried because of the high divorce rate in the business. Also, I'm unsure about the effect on my career. What do you think?

Kirstie, Liverpool

Go ahead. At the very least, you'll have lots of fun choosing marble dinner tables and leather settees. And if it ends in divorce, you are guaranteed your own cable television chat show.

Dear Serena,
I was feeling a bit run down recently, and a friend suggested I try a session of reiki healing. Having handed over £35 to a woman in a tie-dyed viscose dress and Bo Derek plaits, I spent 45 minutes lying on my back with my eyes closed while she cupped her hands and held them over various points on my body. After half an hour, I got so bored I fell asleep, waking 15

minutes later to find my healer beaming at me and telling me how well I'd responded. I am still knackered, and £35 poorer. Can I ask for my money back?

Shaunagh, Hampstead

I have consulted my pet guru, who closed his eyes, pinched his fingers together and, after some time, said: "My Daughter. Remember the words of the sages. Tired person easy mark to part with money." Be philosophical. Accept this experience as a lesson in being more judicious in your choice of adviser. Also: cut down on booze, eat your greens and try going to bed early for a few weeks. You will be amazed at the regenerative effect it has upon your chakras. And that will be £20 plus VAT, please.

Knotty problems with the world today? Write to Dear Serena, The Independent, 18th Floor, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, where they will be treated with the customary sympathy

ARIES

TRY TO cultivate polite people - they'll take the edge off the sullen aggression you're exuding. Resist the attractions of people you can behave badly with. Your amorous talents will exercise themselves in an unusual, not to say extreme, way - you may soar to the heights of filthy, self-indulgent, orgasmic depravity or plumb the depths of chastity. You'll jump to conclusions and squash flat whatever's there at the moment. Try to keep your private parts in the private.

TAURUS

THIS IS unusual for you, this sudden sparkle, it's as though you're enjoying yourself. People who have admired you from a distance may be caught with the desire to put their hands inside your underclothing; they sense they will not be repulsed. And then the post-coital revulsion surprises you: it doesn't happen. You want more - it's as though you've been blessed, and happiness delivers you friendship, money, luck. It matters not that you understand it so little.

GEMINI

YOU CAN now understand what's been going on - unless, of course, you're determined not to. The forces that have been operating so covertly are available - but for your eyes only. For once, your memory won't let you down and you may be able to keep two - or even three - ideas in your head at the same time. This means it's a good time to apply for a new job. Your mind has never been more independent and may declare UDI from the rest of your body.

CANCER

THAT BREATH of fresh air - is it to clear your head, or to impel you somewhere you fear may be too dark? A sense of growth - rebirth almost - is growing, but whether it's because you have further degradation to go through first, or whether you have your destiny in your grasp already... this is not clear. Praise God, pass the ammunition and remember the moisturiser (especially if you're male). You are right to be wary of anger, but don't fear it.

POPPY FOLLY

YOUR STARS: IT COULD HAPPEN

Love in the sign of Taurus is not as easy as it sounds - Taureans are so swollen in such inconvenient places that it's hard to get as close as you need to, assuming you want to do the job in the old-fashioned way. They are unlike air signs (who are passionate but quick - being laborious, lubricious but, above all, longwinded. Taureans don't make so much a meal of their love life as a Tudor banquet. They like to stuff animals with other animals before stuffing themselves; they like to make a *grande bouffe* of the bedroom in a way that isn't entirely legal, even in these days. Luckily, Taureans are not very communicative, except when they're hungry (hence William the Silent and Charles Bronson). They never talk much during sex (except to say, "Turn over") so we're always kept at a distance and, in a sense (perhaps, in fact, in every sense) this is just as well. However, here is a local curiosity: at their

point of crisis Taureans are prone to making a strange whistling sound and shrieking, "Oobitdah! Oobitdah! Oobitdah! Oobitdah!" When Wilgenstein found himself doing precisely this, he realised that he had refuted his maxim ("Of that we cannot speak thereof we must remain silent") and gave up both philosophy and sex for a new career in macramé.

Taureans love submissives, which is why we find born this week in the dark heart of the sign Mayor Daley, Sir Stafford Cripps, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Saddam Hussein, William Randolph Hearst, and Sir Thomas Beecham. Submissives also like Taureans - which is why Mary Wollstonecraft only ever had English lovers, and why she was so irritable all the time.

Taurus has gluttony engrained into its astrology but there are those who are expert at turning this to good use - Marconi, as we know, made the world's first radio receivers out of ice cream.

LEO

YOU ARE a fighting sign so it shouldn't be surprising how querulous and quarrelsome you are becoming. Your argumentation will be basic but ineffective. The only source of success for you will be force - but even if you do succeed, was it really what you wanted? Now less than ever should you trust your instincts. A sort of damaged romantic will find you irresistible - nor will they be disappointed because your talent for excess sex is never more evident.

VIRGO

YOUR MIND is quick, brilliant and penetrating but only in the manner of a mechanical needle. It rarely goes deep, and inevitably returns. This week, though, an aspect with Uranus allows your intuitions to come from further beneath the surface. This might create problems: rely on inspiration from above rather than below. You make vulgar assumptions and arrive at ridiculous conclusions, but the drama with which you unburden yourself is worth watching.

LIBRA

YOU'RE IN luck, but then you usually are. Delight bubbles out of you like springwater and many come to refresh themselves. You show off so skillfully that many fall in love with you, and there will even be those who want you. Disappointment will dog them, naturally, but they will not regret the experience. An aspect with Jupiter may stir a vague religious sense - perhaps you will ascend from this sphere (you will want to write the memorial service first).

SCORPIO

MARS STILL isn't pulling its weight but Mercury has come into trine with Pluto and that opens up the depths to your frightening intuitions. You can see the sources of power, you can sense the deep structure of physical arrangements - the material and emotional architecture created by pure eogery. You could probably learn enough to change the shape of anyone around you - if only you had the energy. Artists and private investigators will be best favoured with this gift.

SAGITTARIUS

AT LAST - ease, comfort, happiness, religious faith - now what's the matter? Venus shines through Jupiter, and the understanding you have of people will be made useful by your self-confidence. Artistic abilities will grow like Jack's beanstalk (perhaps you'll get a call-back on a pantomime). Your partnerships will flourish but you might be bewildered by new events. You are better at faith than knowledge, but friends only want you to be nice - and for once, that's easy.

CAPRICORN

AT LEAST this opposition with Mars will bring you out of yourself, even it is something of a cockpit it brings you out into. But you will struggle for supremacy, and knowing your talent for dominion, you can exult in the upper hand. A conjunction with the Sun will then confirm your superiority: it is essential that you do not give away what you have won. Success is far harder to deal with than failure (you haven't had much practice, after all).

AQUARIUS

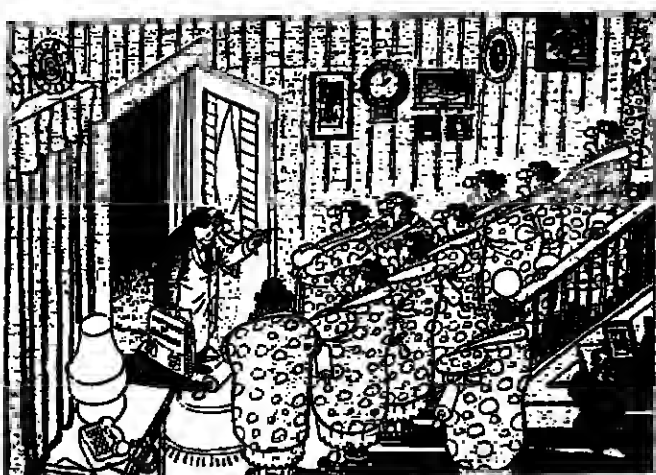
AQUARIAN FUNSTERS are well-endowed with spangling sexuality and romantic daring. If you are free to join the dance you will create new steps, turns and twisted ways of approaching the problem and this will be very interesting for your exhausted partner (who will wonder suspiciously where you learned this new stuff). Any opportunities in radio or television will offer more success than you could cope with. Rich people will like you more than you like them.

PISCES

TWO NASTY aspects kick your week off and you will limp through the week as a result. The first will inflate your fragile ego with an unfulfillable desire for recognition - perhaps you'll start a cult, or attempt to get into the record books with unrecognisable sex acts. Mars only makes things worse - if you try to act decently, repression will form neurotic keloids deep in your psyche. It really is best to try and express these things - but only if we can watch.

CLASSIC CARTOONS

MARTIN PLIMMER ON
MAC



'Cloning smelly old sheep. What time do you call

THOUGH NOT as distinctive or detailed a stylist as Giles, whose wide-screen format and scope of setting influenced him, Stan McMurtry, or Mac, wins prizes for longevity and reliability, which increase in number the longer and more reliably he works. Last month's Press Awards named him Cartoonist of the Year in his 28th year as political and social cartoonist for the *Daily Mail*, during which time he also wrote comedy sketches

(with Bernard Cookson) for Tommy Cooper and Dave Allen. Mac is always smartly topical, often combining two news themes in one gag. He can link the announcement of a synthetic replacement for Guards' bearskins with a report of a woman whose underpants spontaneously ignite. Impossible? An exhibition of Mac's work at the Rae-Smith Gallery, Cecil Court, London WC2 from 27 April, shows how it's done.

HILLARY CLINTON said it was hard to imagine there had been yet another school shooting. Seven such incidents have occurred in the States over the past 18 months, and they will continue happening, probably with increasing frequency, until the underlying causes are effectively addressed.

The reasons for such violence are uncontroversial and well-known. But just because the problem is understood and has a solution in theory does not mean that it will be solved in practice. Social factors, values and personal interests - in short, political considerations - get in the way. With a powerful gun lobby, controlling a gun culture that allows easy access to lethal weapons to anyone unable to control their anger turns out to be a hot potato too far.

Solving a social problem is of a higher order of complexity than an intellectual problem considered in isolation. People are involved. Like a good puzzle, such a problem must be anti-intuitive, which militates against the very consensus necessary to motivate change in a democracy. Great minds do not think alike. Otherwise they wouldn't be great. Societies, crowds and groups have their own logic. You can reason with individuals. But demagogues don't reason with crowds - they sway them. Even if all agree on what needs doing - power, skill and political will are needed to effect change. But we

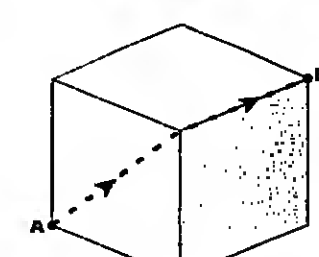


Fig 1a

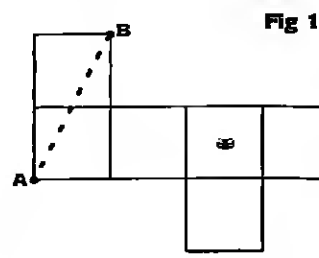


Fig 1b

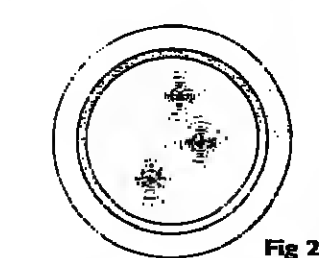


Fig 2

elect politicians not for their problem-solving skills, but on image: how they talk and move. The line from the Tom Lehrer song: "At last we have a senator who can really sing and dance!" points up a truth. So expert advisers are needed.

But what if social good and personal self-interest conflict? You can always fall back on Maslanka's Third Law: "For every expert advising a course of action, there is one who advises the exact opposite." Choose the right experts and you can free yourself of doing the right thing.

Solutions to last week's problems

1 It is tempting to "see" the shortest route between opposite diagonals of the cube as shown in Fig 1a. Unfolding it does not distort the surface, however, and the shortest route is as in Fig 1b. 2 See next week's Puzzlemaster: 3 TIME FLIES = LIFETIMES.

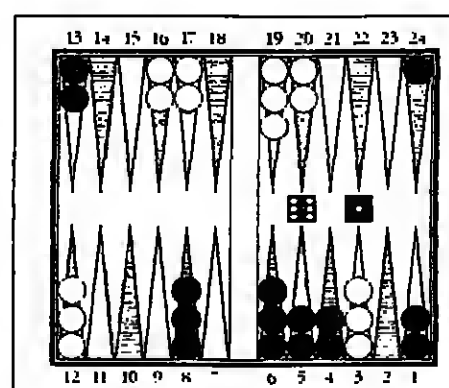
Points to ponder

1 Three flies swim in a straight line away from a common starting point in a bowl of soup. How can the starting point be found? (Fig 2) 2 3 legs good, 4 legs not so good. Under what wobbly circumstances? Why? 3 Find a single-word anagram of COSY IGLOO.

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BACKGAMMON

CHRIS BRAY



IN THE *Strand Magazine* Tournament of 1899, Watson was drawn against the fabled Moriarty. Early in the match, playing black, he had to decide how to play 61.

Since Holmes had often expostulated on the strength of a 5-point prime, he decided to risk leaving a blot on his mid-point and played 13/7, 8/7. The deouement was swift. Moriarty hit with a 41 playing 13/12, 22/18. Watson entered with a 53 playing bar/22, 6/1 and two rolls later had to drop Moriarty's redouble.

Later, showing the position to the great detective, he bemoaned his luck. "Luck, Watson, has nothing to do with it," said Holmes. "I am afraid that once again you have let a general

principle interfere with your analysis of a position.

"Five-point primes are all very well, but what is black's objective here? Surely his main priority is to escape his back man. Once that has been achieved he should win easily. This would indicate that the correct play is 24/18, 6/5. A tactical point, which should help you to conclude that this is the right play, is that if Moriarty hits your blot on his bar point with a 1 or a 2, he must break a good point to do so. In this instance, escaping the back man takes priority over building what might be a very short-lived 5-point prime." "As ever, Holmes, your explanation makes everything seem so simple." "How complimentary, my dear Watson."

